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ABSTRACT

Fourteen nationally recognized middle school educators were asked in 1977 to respond to the current issues in middle school education in a personal way, focusing on the concerns that seemed most vital to them. This document consists of their responses. Among the topics addressed are public attitudes, economic pressures, teacher and administrator training, curriculum requirements, conflicts between those advocating junior high schools and those supporting the middle school concept, declining enrollment, disagreements concerning standardization or individualization of the curriculum, and a list of needs including those for evaluation, accountability, adequate research, closing the gap between theory and practice, and considering the physical and intellectual makeup of middle school students. The papers presented are intended to provide a basis for planning the future of the middle school movement. (Author/PGD)

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THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Look Ahead

Edited by

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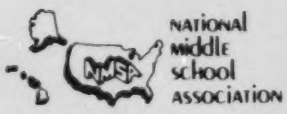

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

In March, 1976, three hundred middle school educators from all across the nation and from several foreign countries, assembled in Gainesville, Florida, for the National Middle School Leadership Seminar.* For three days this group discussed what they had identified as the most significant issues in the field of middle school education. In the nearly two years since that time, the issues identified at the seminar have continued to grow in both clarity and centrality. They are summarized and listed here for your information.

To what degree should competition be encouraged or discouraged in the middle school?

What are the characteristics of an effective middle school teacher?

Are many functioning middle schools really much different from junior high schools?

What needs to be done regarding teacher certification for middle schools?

What needs to be done regarding accreditation and evaluation standards for the middle school?

What are the significant funding issues ahead?

How can the middle school best respond to the "Back to Basics" movement?

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* Co-sponsored by the University of Florida, Alachua County Public Schools, the Florida League of Middle Schools, The National Middle School Association, The Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, and the Kettering Foundation (I.D.E.A.)

What is the role of the middle school in the area of affective education?

How can middle school consultants improve their credibility with public school educators?

What special curriculum areas should be the focus for the future in middle schools?

Is there a preferred school facility design for the middle schools?

What can the middle school and the high school learn from each other?

Is individualized instruction either desirable or obtainable?

Does it really matter how we report pupil progress?

Has the middle school emphasized quantity over quality?

Is the middle school movement destined to follow where the junior high school led?

How can the middle school be student-centered and academically respectable at the same time?

Are middle school students less accountable than junior high school students?

Do we demand enough from our students?

Is a relevant student-centered curriculum really possible?

Can the philosophy of the middle school be implemented in a researchable form?

What are the dimensions of the "hidden curriculum" of American middle schools?

Is diversity in the structure of various middle schools a strength or a weakness, from the point of view of the national movement?

How essential is interdisciplinary team teaching to the national movement?

How essential is multi-age grouping to the middle school concept?

How essential is a homebase advisor-advisee time to the middle school concept?

Can students really develop democratic values and behavior in today's middle schools, as they are now operating?

Can universities be expected to fulfill their responsibilities in middle school teacher education?

Where do we break through the vicious cycle of no good schools without trained teachers, no trained teachers without good schools?

What happens when there is no team planning time?

Who's to blame when middle schools fail to measure up? Consultants? Administrators? Teachers? Parents? Students?

Why do so many middle schools start out so well and become mediocre so quickly?

What do we do while we're waiting for adequately prepared teachers?

How important is the school principal to the success or failure of a middle school?

Are there enough educators to meet the challenge of developing and maintaining good middle schools in large numbers?

How can the NMSA help developing middle schools?

Exploration versus back to the basics: who's winning now?

Is continuous progress in the education of individual learners really possible?

Which grades do not belong in the middle school?

Are consultants in the real world?

It seemed obvious to me, both at that time, and now, that the responses we make collectively, as middle school educators, to these issues, will in large measure determine the future of intermediate education. This bulletin is offered as a working paper, as a grouping of tentative and personal responses to these issues; but also with the suggestion that many of the issues dealt with herein do possess a perennial quality.

Fourteen contributors, each recognized for his or her national stature as a middle school educator, have been asked to respond to these issues in their own personal way, focusing on those items which seemed most crucial to them. I believe they have done an admirable job and I thank them for their efforts. I also wish to thank the National Middle School Association for recognizing the value and timeliness of such an endeavor and for the eager support which the Association has given to the publication and distribution of the final report. I also wish to acknowledge, gratefully, the cooperation of

the Alachua County Public School System, Gainesville, Florida, in printing the bulletin. Without their help it would have been an impossible venture.

As a reader, your challenge is to do something about what you read.

- Paul S. George
July, 1977

PART ONE

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL - PRESENT AND FUTURE : A COLLAGE

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

The statements in this section possess a common feature. Each writer has attempted to balance his reflections on the issues with an approach that might be described as force-field analysis. That is, the manuscripts each cite what the author considers to be those factors which are crucial to the future of middle school education, and then suggest those actions which will be necessary to allow middle school education to move forward rather than backward.

In the first group, Thomas Gatewood reflects on what he believes to be reasons for both optimism and pessimism and ends with a call for attention to the need for accountability and evaluation. James Fox follows with an examination of several forces which affect the middle school, including public skepticism, the need for balance in the curriculum, and the possibility of flexible alternatives offered within individual schools. Fox, too, summarizes with a suggestion for self-evaluation and self-examination within the middle school movement. Joseph Bondi sets forth a series of guidelines for developing future middle schools and cites the importance of well-trained principals and effective inservice education to future growth. William Alexander writes convincingly about the need for flexibility, for an ever-evolving design for middle schools in the future.

In the second collection of papers, the authors identify issues and suggest the answers which they believe will keep the middle school movement on course. Robert Malinka alerts us to trouble spots such as the continuing bad feeling between supporters of the junior high school and middle school educators, the limited amount of reliable research with which we

support our efforts, and the increasing need for improvement in the K-12 articulation process. Jon Wiles cites a series of needs, including the still widening gap between theory and practice, and the need for a focus on practical implementation strategies. Wiles also supports the need for identification and evaluation of exemplary middle schools. Thomas Curtis re-examines the rationale for middle school education by studying the case for uniqueness of the middle school, the need for a general education focus in the middle school curriculum as well as a foundation for the curriculum in individual needs of students rather than the socially described needs of adult groups. Finally, Nicholas Georgiady calls our attention to the impact of growth in the numbers of new middle schools combined with the effects of declining enrollments on staff development opportunities.

The combined effect of the work of these authors is to present a collage of viewpoints, challenging each of us to sort out what we believe to be crucial; forcing each of us to arrive at our own judgements about optimism or pessimism for the future. Our responses will make a difference.

OPTIMISM, PESSIMISM AND THE FUTURE

A LESS THAN OPTIMISTIC (BUT REALISTIC?) VIEW OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL -- 1977

Thomas E. Gatewood
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Central Mighigan University
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Two or three years ago, during a discussion period following a speech I had given at a national conference, I was asked, "Where is the middle school movement in terms of its past growth and future potential?" In answering, I borrowed the words of a campus militant of the 1960's when asked about the future of the radical student movement of that era: "I'm pessimistic, with hope." When questioned again in 1976, I replied, "I'm optimistic with confidence." But now, in 1977, "I'm frankly worried."

My optimism in 1976 stemmed from several hopeful indicators. Much had happened to the middle school movement in the preceding two years. Before that time, however, many leaders and observers in the movement had been uncertain and anxious about the future due to some bothersome signs. The available research had indicated a significant gap between the main tenets of the theoretical middle school concept proposed by leading authorities and actual educational practices in most middle schools. It appeared that many of these schools had adopted the educational programs and practices of the long-condemned junior highs. At the national and state

levels, very little had transpired to provide much-needed identity and organization. Few colleges had taken steps to prepare teachers for transescents. And school in-service programs were highly unsystematic, ill-planned, and generally ineffective. In some states and in many school districts, middle schools were often plagued with more inadequate program resources and financial support, poorer facilities, and less recognition than their counterparts in elementary schools and high schools.

Causes for Optimism in 1976

In essence, the middle school movement seemed to be encountering the same problems which had blocked the development of the junior high into a legitimate educational organization in the first 75 years of this century. By 1976, however, there were promising, indeed healthy signs that the American middle school had turned corners and overcome obstacles which the earlier junior high movement had been unable to surmount.

The first and most tangible of these signs was the successful development of national and state middle school organizations. The National Middle School Association had grown out of a relatively obscure midwest association into a thriving organization with more than one thousand members, a quality journal (Middle School Journal), and successful annual conferences. Many states and regions had developed their own organizations. For example, the Florida League of Middle Schools had 140 schools as institutional members and the Michigan Association of Middle School Educators had over 500 individual members. Other states such as Ohio, Indiana,

Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Colorado, Kentucky, Georgia, Texas, Missouri, and the New England and Rocky Mountain regions had reported similar growth patterns.

Another important development by 1976 had been the growing recognition of middle schools at the state and university levels through new certification requirements for middle school teachers and the concomitant development of pre-service teacher education programs. An increase from two to eight states with middle school teacher certification since 1970 and another fourteen states in the planning stage was evidence of this recognition.

There is no question, then, that the middle school movement has been "greening." It has already proved itself more enduring and significant than most bandwagon movements, fads, and phenomena of times past. The movement is still very much alive and seems to be pointing in the right direction. It is blessed with a solid bedrock of active persons from many different educational persuasions--a unique cooperative blend of teachers, administrators, parents, and college personnel. The movement has not been assisted (or afflicted, depending upon your point of view) by vast infusions of state, federal or foundation dollars. Its strength has emanated from the "sweats of brows and the skins of hides" of its ardent supporters.

1977 -- Another Story

So why the present feelings of worry and concern only a year later in 1977? These favorable recent signs, impressive though they may be, are quantitative. The first ten years of the middle

school movement in the United States were primarily a growth phenomenon in terms of numbers more than in the development of significant, identifiable, authentic middle school programs. Where is evidence to be found that the quality of programs has occurred along with the burgeoning numbers, impressive new associations, certification, and overall identity? The middle school has a future only if what happens behind classroom doors recognizes a special program for a youngster with unique needs and characteristics in the transitional years between childhood and adolescence.

The middle school movement is crossing dangerous waters at present. Its very future will depend upon how well we negotiate several serious hazards and obstacles. I would like to pretend that some of the problems and dangers to be mentioned forthwith do not exist and thus will go away. But, in their nagging and irritating forms, they do exist. We have to get on with the task of recognizing and addressing them so that appropriate solutions can be implemented.

Only a year or two ago, most of my contacts with middle schools as a consultant and in-service facilitator were concerned with curricular and instructional program improvements. I could see a number of grass roots changes indicating that many actual school programs were indeed maturing and becoming more learner-centered. While some of these directions still continue in a few school districts, other disturbing new trends seem to be emerging. I have been called upon more and more in recent months to help middle school educators justify their programs to their constituencies -- the school boards, parents, and citizen groups that are asking hard questions and demanding specific answers.

Along with these fellow educators, I feel that I am increasingly spending my time on the firing line, shifting in posture away from initiating and facilitating toward defending and justifying. In this game, believe me, offense is much more appealing and compelling than defense.

American public education has fallen on hard times the likes of which have not been experienced since the depression years of the 1930's. We have to face up to some bitter realities. Whole school systems have been forced to close down or go on split-day sessions because financial wells are running dry. Thousands of dynamic young teachers are being pink-slipped or transferred against their wills to other schools or teaching disciplines. School plants that were opened less than five years ago due to swelling enrollments are now being padlocked because of falling enrollments. Universities that had planned to develop new middle school teacher preparation programs have had to scrap those plans because of severe budget cuts and faculty lay-offs. Countless school districts have eliminated in-service programs for the same reasons.

In bad economic times, citizens become much more concerned about the allocation of their tax dollars for education. They say no to tax referendums and bond issues while demanding that the so-called frills be eliminated, which generally means anything in the program other than English, math, social studies, and science. They insist that schools concern themselves only with teaching the so-called basics, raising standardized test achievement scores, and imposing traditional rules and regulations to control student discipline and maintain school order. Feeling these pressures, state legislatures and departments of education develop

plans for accountability through which demands are placed upon local school districts to prove their cost-effectiveness. Weighted formulae for state financing of schools come into operation, allocating more funds for elementary and high schools than for middle schools.

Another interesting phenomenon occurs when the middle school becomes a political football in the community. The scenario goes something like this: Declines in enrollment and/or shifting centers of population call for reorganizing grade levels, most frequently from a grades 7-9 to a grades 6-8 or 5-8 pattern. A parent group, out of fear that their children will have to be bused a greater distance from home or that they will have to attend an 'undesirable' school (translated by parents and perpetuated by real estate agents as any school with an ethnic and socioeconomic mix of students other than one's own), places pressure on the local school board to maintain the status quo.

Within the context of these problems, where political and administrative expedience supersede educational considerations and needs, it becomes difficult to maintain the original pioneering spirit of the middle school. Problems of teacher morale, apathy and unwillingness to change are being reported by many administrators. They note that more and more of their teachers are becoming afflicted by apathy and a form of anomie, desiring only to be left alone to shut their doors on the outside world, teach their classes, and go home. The enthusiasm and interest just aren't there as they were only two or three years ago.

The Future Has Promise, If...

Is it possible for the middle school movement to move ahead, to continue its past exciting and exhilarating momentum? Despite all of the aforementioned problems, I think it can.

Initially, we should neither shrink from nor strike back at the claims and criticisms of pressure groups, boards of education, and legislative bodies. We must admit, painful though it may be, that they may be frequently correct in demanding more accountability from the educational establishment. If we truly believe in our programs, we should vigorously answer these demands rather than assume fearful defensive poses. However, our justifications must go beyond mere rhetoric and philosophy. The middle school philosophy is indeed difficult to characterize in the terms educational researchers are accustomed to using to operationalize concepts. Unfortunately, though, such a disclaimer may be looked upon by the critics as a smug "cop-out." The concerns of those who want to "look before they leap" into more humanistic middle school programs will not be eliminated by our contention that the essence of the middle school concept is like poetry or religion and must be accepted on faith and intuition alone. Neither poetry nor religion are supported by public tax dollars.

Whether we like it or not, most states are presently gripped by very real demands for accountability. While many of the tenets of accountability are apparently antithetical to the middle school concept, a compromise of sorts must be worked out. Is it unreasonable to ask educators to state in clear and concise terms the underlying philosophy of the middle school? We need not continuously

re-invent the "middle school wheel." This philosophy has already been stated with clarity and precision by such notables as Alexander, Compton, Eichhorn, Lounsbury, and Vars. Is it possible to develop school programs consistent with that philosophy? Yes, but they must be developed in a way few middle schools have actually attempted. The achilles heel of the middle school movement has been and continues to be the absence of a comprehensive model for program evaluation. Such a paradigm must be implemented to insure rational program development and should contain the following components:

1. The middle school philosophy should be stated in pupil-oriented goals and objectives.

2. Needs assessments of pupils, teachers, administrators, parents and the community at large should be done.

3. Programs should be developed and implemented in terms of the stated philosophy and the identified needs.

4. Process evaluation should be conducted as implemented programs are in operation. Questions such as the following should be answered: Are pupils achieving more than, or just as well as, pupils in traditional junior highs? Is there satisfactory cognitive growth throughout the school year? Can evidence be obtained that pupil self-concept, attitudes toward school and other persons, motivation, self-reliance, and creativity are enhanced?

5. Product evaluation should be carried out, probably before the end of each school year, as to ways the programs must be altered and improved to insure their continuous renewal and evolution. Such decisions should be based also upon data obtained in the process evaluation phase.

Most middle schools have shyed away from such a model not because of the absence of strategies and instruments to gather cognitive data for needs assessment and for process and product evaluation. Tests in Print and the Mental Measurement Yearbook are indexes of hundreds of such measures. Most have been stymied when they attempt to measure and evaluate the more affective components of the middle school philosophy. These components represent the very essence of that philosophy since most of the needs, characteristics and problems of transescents are essentially affective in nature. This frustration need not exist because many instruments and assessment measures are presently available to provide conclusive research data in the affective domain. The books, Improving Educational Assessment and An Inventory of Measures of Affective Behavior (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Washington, D.C.) and Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes (Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan) are useful and very practical guides to dozens of such instruments. Another outstanding source of affective measures is Tests in Print: A Collection of Unpublished Research Instruments available from the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey. This collection contains microfiche of 230 tests along with an annotated index which provides detailed information on each. Tools and procedures such as those can enable middle school educators to build

their own concept of accountability and thus greatly enhance present narrow accountability efforts. The middle school can and must be both humanistic and accountable, thus serving the needs of its pupils and its outside constituencies.

So, I am "frankly worried," but only if we fail to deal directly with and grow from the present crisis in American education. The traditional junior high school movement had a very poor track record as it encountered several dilemmas of the past 75 years. Whether or not the middle school will follow this example is clearly within the hands of its leaders, both individual and organizational.

MIDDLE SCHOOL: SURVIVING, REFINING AND GROWING IN THE FUTURE

James H. Fox, Jr.
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Mansfield, Ohio

The middle school of the eighties will have survived a large number of conflicting pressures, both internal and external. Some of these pressures will modify the way we portray middle school to the public, while some will alter the basic configuration of middle school structure.

Five major areas of concern will be discussed in this article. The first is a pervasive skepticism about the ability of our educational institutions to produce capable citizens. Second is pressure toward the dilution of the middle school purpose as a student-centered rather than a subject-centered institution. The third issue revolves around a need to aggressively promote a balanced program in our middle schools, not allowing any component of the program to survive and expand at the expense of the others. A fourth area of concern speaks to historical precedent. If, indeed, the American junior high school movement started with a major thrust toward student-centered concerns and followed with a movement toward a subject-centered approach, then must we repeat history and do the same with the middle school? This relates to the

earlier issue of dilution of purpose which could lead down that same historical path. Finally, amidst all of these pressures we must establish and maintain our own credibility. We must be exceedingly honest and direct about what middle school can and cannot accomplish. We must not promise too much or exagerate the potential of the middle school.

Skepticism About Our Abilities and Motivation

There is a growing skepticism in this country that is affecting all levels of education including the middle school. This skepticism, produced by a series of events over the last several years, has deeply unsettled our ability to believe in the efficacy of institutions. The mass decision-making occurring in our institutions, particularly in public school districts, may be a more theoretically perfect form of popular democracy but is ineffectual compared to representative democracy. The broad scale citizen involvement that is with us, is necessary, however, until faith in a representative system is restored to the point where balance is achieved and institutions are once again perceived as trustworthy decision-making bodies.

To some extent we have lost that trust by our own activities. We now face a backlash from many of the innovative programs of the sixties and early seventies that developed without a concern for accountability to the public at large. In the spotlight of a product-oriented middle class, we seem to stumble badly while spending ever increasing amounts of public funds. Our institutions, like us, are also victims of the flow of events. Watergate and the exposure of mismanagement and corruption in a few institutions have combined with the recent economic slowdown to cause greater scrutiny of our efforts by the public.

The middle school program, as an institution, is now in its late childhood and must face these pressures as a challenge to be turned in a positive direction. The teaching of basic skills at the middle school level will be examined for the next few years with a vigor that has not been seen since the 1950's. In the meantime, the crunch of continuing inflation, job depression, and a diminished growth in the gross national product is affecting local school districts economically. These things, added to public mistrust of institutions, have combined to facilitate the largest number of rejections of tax and bond referendums in the history of American public education. Our middle schools will have to survive and grow in the midst of these problems.

Dilution of Purpose

The realities of severe budget cutbacks at the local level are causing a reassessment of spending priorities. The danger to middle schools stems from the age old pressure to cut the so-called frills. As a result, the programs could lose the flavor of a student-focused curriculum that provides necessary exposure to aesthetics and open-ended exploratory offerings. Additional guidance and special services that are totally focused toward helping the student to become a well-integrated human being are often endangered in what appears to be a time of necessary belt-tightening. Teaming itself may become the target of increased per-pupil costs, particularly in districts that have reduced the total number of students handled by a full team unit.

The result can be a dilution of the middle school purpose, a swing away from a focus on helping a child through the trauma of transescence to a focus on the pure acquisition of information and skills. If local accountability moves to that and nothing more, we have lost the middle school concept.

The pressures for dilution of purpose at the local level will increase over the next five years, and may affect the national movement. How do we offset these pressures, and avoid losing the opportunity to provide a much higher quality of experience for middle school pupils? There is no substitute for hard work, quality staff development and constructive community involvement. However, a special form of planned alternative programs at the middle school level may help avert possible destruction of the middle school concept in some local areas, and may provide experiences for students that more closely match their learning styles. An organizational pattern which has the capability of absorbing pressure groups within alternatives of their choice has a definite appeal in periods of divided priorities. In an article dealing with the reduction of stress in an open middle school (Fox, 1975), this author proposed a middle school structure that involves alternatives in teaching and learning strategies which match teachers and students. A single middle school can provide several planned teaching strategies with students matched in terms of learning effectiveness. Teachers can be assigned to teams according to their effectiveness as learning facilitators in a particular environment. The choices for parents and students can be clearer and more systematic. For example, the organizational possibilities range from teams utilizing environments emphasizing independent student learning to teacher centered environments where students are largely dependent in their learning activities. The school can be better tuned in to student needs.

The middle schools that survive as viable programs into the eighties may be those which offer real and understandable alternatives for parents and students. It is those schools that will best be able to withstand the pressure from groups and individuals who would have us back up to the fifties. Alternatives in educational environment are not the only answer to the problems that will be faced in the middle school movement over the next several years. They are, however, an important part of the complex combination of actions that must be taken for good middle schools to survive.

The Need to Aggressively Promote a Balanced Program

The middle school speaks to the individual needs of the transescent child. Growth in such critical basic skills areas as written and verbal communication, social and scientific concepts, and computational and manipulative skill development is an integral part of any viable middle school program. We must aggressively promote public knowledge of our efforts in these areas. Our stance must be one of dedication to a balanced program involving the three central thrusts of middle school: basic skills, exploratory and co-curricular.* Good junior high schools enjoyed a reputation for content-centered activity that emphasized basic skill development while the middle school must promote the thesis that it can do even better by taking that same content, reordering and bringing it closer to the specific needs of the transescent child.

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* "Exploratory" in this context refers to a controlled choice experience of practical and fine arts activities presented in an interdisciplinary manner flowing across the entire time spent in middle school. "Co-curricular" refers to an open choice exploratory type of experience that allows tasting a multitude of experiences during one of the most receptive times in a person's life.

Must the Middle School Follow the Same Historical Pathway as the Junior High?

Fifty years ago the junior high school operated more along the concept that we now refer to as "middle school." Leonard V. Koos, Professor of Education at the University of Minnesota said in 1920, that among the most popular descriptors of the junior high school at that time were the "recognition of individual differences" and "exploration for guidance." Later in the same decade, others expressed similar values (Van Til, 1961). The Department of Superintendence of the NEA published a listing of descriptors of the junior high school in the late twenties. Again, the most frequently mentioned descriptor was "meeting individual differences in pupils." (Van Til, 1961).

If the primary focus was to meet individual differences in the 1920's, what happened in the next thirty years to alter that purpose? The country traveled through depression, world war, cold war, economic boom, a revolution in scientific technology, and embraced preparation for college as the saving pathway for almost all youth. Even with excellent thrusts toward a more child-centered curriculum such as the Core curriculum and others, the pressure of society, particularly in the late fifties, for quantity matriculations into college pushed school districts toward a more subject-centered curriculum at the junior high school level. Thus, the middle school became another chance to start out with the original purpose: to construct a child-centered environment which focuses on individual differences and promotes personal integration and growth. The middle school does not have to follow where the junior high has led. However, the same societal pressures noted earlier will be with us.

Maintaining Our Credibility

Middle school buildings that do not contain viable programs hurt us badly, just as laissez-faire open classrooms have destroyed the credibility of the open classroom movement in many parts of this country. We must vigorously move to either change weak middle school programs for the better or "to cull the wheat from the chaff" and disassociate the movement from such programs. As noted earlier, the foundation for an aggressive stance on middle school programming must be balance. Therefore, in changing middle school programs for the better, we must not allow exploratory to compete with basics or with co-curricular, but must argue for all three in a balanced relationship. While the middle school may not produce significantly higher test scores concerning raw skills, we need to be about the business of agressively displaying the gains made in self-concept and integration of personality which are the two most important products of the middle school years.

The rapid growth in the number of middle schools that we have seen over the past two years may not continue to accelerate at the same rate. This can be a challenge to make what we have more accountable. Paul George (1975) has talked about "a middle school if you can keep it." We can keep it, but to do so we are going to have to refine our programs and prepare to hold them up to the scrutiny of an intensely interested public. The real challenge over the next several years is an improvement in quality much more so than an increase in quantity.

The primary force which may inhibit the full realization of quality middle school programs across the country in almost all school districts may be ourselves. We must view the "back to basics" movement as a challenge to exhibit what the middle school can do in the basic skills areas. These areas should not only include the traditionally accepted areas, but also basic skills in appreciation of aesthetics as well as personal and career development. Our eventual success will depend upon the positive and assertive attitude that we display in meeting this challenge.

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ADDRESSING THE ISSUES: THE MIDDLE SCHOOL A POSITIVE CHANGE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

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Introduction

The emergence of the middle school in the United States has represented a dramatic break from the past. Much progress has been made in developing and implementing new programs for pre-and early adolescents, yet there is still much to be done. As with other changes in American education, the middle school has met with varying degrees of understanding and acceptance. Issues have been identified that have continued significance for the middle school movement and they must be addressed. Beginning with the processes involved in developing good middle schools and sustaining good programs once they are developed, we must provide the leadership necessary to insure that the middle school will continue as a positive force in American education.

Developing Good Middle Schools: Some Guidelines

Many school districts are actively engaged in planning or implementing middle school programs. The planning process is critical in determining the success of a middle school. As a consultant to schools and school districts across the country, this writer has been involved in planning and implementing numerous middle school programs. The following guidelines are suggested for those beginning the transition to middle schools:

1. Involve as many individuals as possible within a school or school district in the planning process. Involve students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community persons from the very beginning. Make sure the involvement is both systematic and meaningful.

2. Conduct a needs assessment in your school and school district. Start with a thorough study of the children to be served in your middle school(s).

3. Develop a set of objectives to meet the needs you have identified.

4. Identify the responsible agents for carrying out the objectives you have formulated.

5. Set up a reasonable timetable for achieving your objectives.

6. Develop an evaluation design to determine the success of your program. Make sure the evaluation process is continual and that the program is monitored over a three to four year period.

7. Develop inservice training that will include all faculty members and administrators in your middle schools. Effective staff development can be carried out at both the district and school levels, but staff development at the school level is more effective.

8. If a consultant is to be utilized, make sure the consultant will stay with you over a two or three year period. Creditability and accountability for consultants result when inservice training is measured over a two-three year period. Moreover, the program of the middle school should constantly be evolving.

9. Sustain inservice training. New teachers need inservice training each year, but returning teachers also need constant reinforcement.

10. Provide adequate time for inservice training. Many districts are not only scheduling traditional summer workshops, but also providing time during the school year for teachers to participate in inservice training. A promising trend found in school districts is the early dismissal of students several days a month to free teachers for inservice training during the school day.

11. In developing new middle school programs, teachers and administrators should be provided with as much lead-time for planning as possible. A year of planning is preferable to a summer of planning for a middle school.

12. Do not attempt more than can be achieved. If your school is under-going the transition to a middle school, do the things your faculty can do well the first year. Trying to do too much too soon often results in a disillusioned faculty and the failure of your middle school program. Don't hesitate to continue the planning process during the first year of partial implementation of a middle school program, especially where there has been little lead-time in planning a total program.

Dealing with the Back to the Basics Movement

Middle schools, as other levels of schooling, have been affected by the back to the basics movement. Defining the term "basics" has become a full-time vocation for those concerned with our schools. To many, in a time of economic difficulties, back to the basics simply means cut the budget. To others, concerned with declining test scores, back to the basics means cutting out many programs not directly teaching the three R's. To others, the term has no impact because they never thought they left the basics.

The diverse needs of transescent youngsters dictate a diverse program. "Basics" must mean not just programs in communication skills and numbers, but programs designed to help youngsters understand the physical changes and social and emotional traumas of transescence. We just simply cannot ignore the

psycho-social and physical changes occuring during the middle school years.

Middle school educators often bear the brunt of criticisms leveled by those who want schools to return to the basics. Special interst classes, exploratory courses, and additional guidance services are often viewed by critics as taking time away from the important task of the school -- teaching basic skills. Organizational changes in the middle school such as team teaching, block scheduling, and inter-disciplinary instruction are also seen as reducing the amount of instruction in the content areas. Countering the critics, middle school educators point out that middle school youngsters are achieving as well or better in skill areas as those in more traditional school settings. Teachers also point with pride at the statistics indicating reduced number of absences and fewer discipline referrals found in many middle schools. Other middle schools have surveys indicating students like school and feel better about themselves and others as a result of the program of their middle schools.

What is basic in the middle school? Everything that will help youngsters grow into fully functioning individuals.

The Middle School in the K-12 Spectrum

Middle schools, as elementary and high schools, have experienced a rapid growth of enrollment over the last twenty years. That growth has now become a decline in enrollment and this phenomenon is having a pronounced effect on the middle school curriculum. Curriculum development in our schools has in many cases been the adopting of commercial, packaged programs and a "bandaid approach." I.P.I., A.A.A.S.,

I.S.C.S., and other alphabet programs were adopted wholesale in schools. Although teachers were trained initially in these programs, an easy job market and low salaries resulted in a rapid turnover of teaching staffs. After four or five years, many adopted programs still existed in schools, but only twenty to thirty percent of the faculty originally trained in the programs remained. Teachers in many instances never really felt any ownership in those programs because they never had a hand in developing them.

Working with school faculties and district staffs, this writer has found in many cases there is little continuity in the content areas. For example, science and social studies programs in many middle schools are a hodge-podge of commercial programs, traditional textbook programs, and teacher designed programs. There is not a smooth flow of curriculum from grades to six through eight in most subject areas. Middle schools have few students at grade level in the skills areas of numbers and communication.

Declining enrollments and lower turnover rates in faculties are giving us some breathing room and we are now beginning to review and update courses of study. Curriculum committees are being organized in subject areas and we see teachers revising curricular areas to fit the needs of emerging adolescent learners. Where there are gaps or overlaps in subject areas, teachers are developing articulated programs. Broad topics that can be related and interrelated are being developed, providing the bases of real interdisciplinary teaching. Teachers are communicating within grade levels, across grade levels, and across disciplines. Most important in this exciting process of revising curriculum is the positive attitude of teachers toward a curriculum they have developed. Even though teachers are still utilizing commercially

designed programs, they are using those programs as a part of a larger teacher designed curriculum. Excellent science, social studies, art, music, physical education, industrial arts, and other programs have been developed. Skills continuums (K-8) in mathematics and language arts are in use and we are implementing excellent programs in many middle schools. Rather than relying on mechanistic approaches to teaching skills, approaches that often leave out teacher and student interaction, teachers are developing humanistic approaches to teaching skills. Basic skills are being taught in middle schools and those skills include skills of critical thinking and organizing and interpreting information.

For the first time in twenty-five years we are seeing a meaningful curriculum developed for the middle grades. Middle schools will affect other levels in the K-12 spectrum. Curriculum articulation K-12, not just 6-8, will result and that indeed will be a positive change in American education.

Developing Competent Principals for the Middle School

In a flight back from Philadelphia one night after both of us had addressed the Delaware Secondary School Administrators, Bill Alexander, the father of the middle school movement, turned to me and asked what I thought was the most important key to the success of the middle school movement. My response was "competent middle school principals." Dr. Alexander agreed.

What do we mean by competent middle school principals? Competent means many things. First, a middle school principal has to understand and love the age group found in the middle grades. Second, he or she has to be an instructional leader and not just a manager. The middle school principal

has to understand organizational structures such as teaming, interdisciplinary teaching, flexible scheduling, and block scheduling, and be able to develop those organizational patterns in his school. He or she has to be creative, dynamic, and communicate well with kids, parents, and teachers alike. Last, the middle school principal has to be strong enough to stand up in the system when the middle school comes under attack from those who don't understand it. A strong middle school leader will be able to communicate with the elementary and high school administrators and work towards an articulated K-12 curriculum. He or she must not see the middle school as an isolated structure, but as part of a total system of education.

Where are these administrators trained? In very few places. Our universities and school districts need to get busy to train good middle school principals. A promising trend in many school districts in the implementation at the school level of curriculum assistants who hold administrative lines, but work directly with teachers in the classroom. Many of these individuals are advancing into principalships and we're experiencing good results from such appointments. Perhaps we'll see the day when we can eliminate Deans of Boys or Girls and Assistant Principals in charge of discipline. How much more productive we could be at the middle school if we could convert those administrative lines into additional guidance and curriculum positions.

Competent middle school principals are indeed a key element in the success of the middle school movement. School districts should develop special programs for identifying promising middle school administrators and provide them with inservice training necessary to work with emerging adolescent learners.

Maintaining Continuous Inservice Training for Teachers

A major problem in the middle school movement has been the lack of sustained inservice training for teachers. Too often, we see a marked decline in the quality of middle school programs because a faculty originally trained for the middle school fails to have follow-up inservice training. Also, new teachers coming into middle schools are not provided with the training the original faculty had during their first year. Unless there is a consistent inservice training for teachers, the middle school will suffer the same fate as the junior high school.

Many school districts are setting up teacher renewal centers where inservice training for new and old teachers is offered on a continued basis throughout the year. Such programs lead to an increased interest in the middle school and help sustain and improve existing middle school programs.

It is unfortunate, but the elementary-secondary syndrome has prevailed in colleges of education. As was the case with the junior high school, very few universities are providing special undergraduate training programs for middle school teachers. Consequently, the major emphasis in the years ahead will continue to be inservice training. Declining enrollments and a tight job market have leveled off the constant turnover of teachers. As a result, we are finding experienced teachers teaching for longer periods of time in our middle schools. Our focus then in the future will be the upgrading of present staffs. The renewal center concept for constant inservice training offers an attractive alternative to the "hit and miss" system of college courses or isolated workshops.

Sustaining Middle Schools - Preventing a Regression to the Junior High School

Middle schools have grown in number in the United States and have resulted in positive changes in American education. Many middle schools in the sixties and seventies resulted from changing enrollment patterns, integration efforts, and a "bandwagon" effect. Many of us saw the wrong reasons for establishing middle schools, but the right opportunities to improve school programs for an age group long ignored in our schools. Declining enrollments, limited budgets, and lack of sustained inservice training have encouraged school boards, school administrators, and teachers in some districts to re-examine middle school structures. These developments are encouraging those really not committed to the education of transescents to suggest the easy way out of returning to the junior high school.

We have now increased data indicating the critical need for school programs designed to meet the needs of pre-and emerging adolescent learners. We are experiencing a social phenomenon where the family unit is steadily eroding. In Florida, for example, for every one hundred marriages last year, there were sixty-six divorces. That statistic is especially startling when a recent survey of values of three thousand middle school youngsters (grades six-eight) in that state indicated the number one value of those youngsters was family security. Family security was defined as "two parents at home who care about me and a secure home where there is no fighting."

At a time in the history of our society where family structure is breaking down and youngsters more than ever need the kind of guidance and personal development activities a middle school can provide, we find some who say let's return to the impersonal grades seven-nine junior or imitation high school. We only have to be reminded that the junior high school had fifty years to prove itself and didn't because it offered a program designed more for adolescents rather than to youngsters in transescence.

Sustaining middle schools means we must go back and re-examine some of our existing middle school programs. Our faculties need to re-study the nature of the age group they are serving and re-establish the philosophy of the middle school. New inservice training programs must be established to help new and old teachers cope with the problem of today's middle school youngster.

Those committed to the middle school program must set up an effective communications network to convince the public and colleagues that the middle school is still the best alternative to the junior high school. The middle school has been a positive change in American education and we must not let it fail.

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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The major issue for the future of the American middle school is whether the middle school becomes a standardized, change-resistant unit within the public school establishment or continues as an innovative, student-centered and therefore ever-changing organization. I perceive no issue as to whether the middle school survives; the issue is in what form will it continue? Will it simply be a grade reorganization continuing the same curriculum and instructional patterns of its predecessors or will it be a unique institution? Will the trend be toward uniformity or diversity among middle schools? Will the knowledge, social, or learner base of the curriculum triangle have priority in middle school planning?

Observation of the phenomenon of middle school development from the very few in existence in the early 1960's to some 4000 or more in the mid-1970's gives little clue as to how the issue will be resolved. One finds tendencies in both directions -- many so-called middle schools that are in reality junior high schools, and many schools that in seeking to be student-centered are responsive to needs for continuing change. No adequate periodic inventories of the numbers going in each of these two directions are available to provide an indication of trends. It seems necessary to define the alternatives more fully, as well as the forces moving toward each, while working with these forces to move the middle schools in the right direction. Surely the right direction is that of an ever-improving, student-centered school constantly being renewed by its continuing planning and evaluation to meet the educational needs of its ever-changing student population.

The Standardized Middle School: Wrong Direction!

Should the middle school movement go in the wrong direction, middle schools will become more and more alike, and probably in general more like the upper elementary and lower secondary schools out of which the middle years were removed to form the new middle school. Unquestionably many so-called middle schools have two programs, one the continued elementary school program for grades five and six or even grade six only and the other the continued junior high school program for the grades seven and eight that were in the former junior high school. Perhaps in even more cases the new middle school is simply a grade 6-8 instead of a grade 7-9 junior high school, following the same schedule, offering the same program, using the same faculty and the

same instructional strategies and extra classroom activities as before. And so the middle schools could become standardized ones simply by following the same standards that made for uniformity among elementary schools and especially among junior high schools influenced as they have been by the high school model and its Carnegie unit program of studies, schedule, and instructional organization.

Even if the middle schools do differ from their predecessor institutions the standardized middle school can result from the same forces that produced the standardized junior high school. The personnel of new schools want identity and security. As characteristic features of good middle schools are defined and promulgated they can be conceived of as guidelines and standards that get fixed in the organization of middle schools. Home base, team teaching, continuous progress, individualized instruction, for example, have been widely identified and implemented in good middle schools. But as such features get modeled and systematized and copied, particular models can become as inflexible features of middle schools as administrative home-rooms, six period days, departmentalized instruction, and interscholastic athletics became standard features of junior high schools. When school leaders and faculties are not prepared for their new situations, there is a great tendency to accept and set in the concrete of school organization such models and standards as are known. Innovation, experimentation, elimination of obsolescent and unsuccessful practice, require security as well as knowledge on the part of the innovator.

Thus the middle school name and grade organization could still be very popular in 1985 -- and we may expect it to be the dominant organization for students in the middle school years -- but the school itself might differ relatively little from one site to another and very little from the standardized junior high school of a quarter-century earlier. Some new educational innovators will be seeking to reform the then traditional middle school/junior high school into some then new and emergent student-centered school in the middle!

The Ever-Emergent Student-Centered Middle School: Right Direction!

Must we go through another cycle of standardization and reform of the school in the middle? It took fifty years (1910-1960) for the junior high school to become so standardized and inflexible that reformers sought to replace the standardized model with a new, emergent middle school version. Surely educators can learn from this history that now is the time to keep middle schools moving through self-renewal processes on an ever-emergent continuum. This continuum can be and should be aided by the focus on the educational needs of the unique age groups served by the middle school, and specifically by the particular population of each middle school.

Should this direction win out, middle schools will be increasingly characterized by diversity. The diversity will exist because of the unique nature of each school's population each year, and the creative plans made by each middle school faculty and community to serve its children well. It will not exist because of the lack of fundamental planning, which results in today's diversity.

Certainly some basic guidelines will be used by middle school faculties as their program is planned annually, and even more frequently. A balanced curriculum providing equally well for the development of transescents as healthy personalities, for the skills and will to continue learning, and for the effective use of knowledge will exist in each middle school. But continuing assessment of the population in these regards will mean that each school faculty must determine what mix of learning opportunities is right for its students each year. Continuous progress of learners will be sought throughout the middle schools of the country, but beginning points and terminal goals will have to be planned with elementary schools below and high schools above for particular populations and the same points and goals will be be uniform among thousands of middle schools in the great variety of school districts of the United States. A definite system of teacher guidance will exist in each school, but its organization will have been worked out in terms of the qualifications and interests of the faculty rather than according to some universal formula. Similarly, systems of organizing instructional groups, of sharing specializations among teachers, and of instruction and evaluation will exist in each school but these systems will be home-made to fit the population of students, the facilities of the school, and the characteristics of the faculty members.

Thus, by 1985 each middle school could be a good middle school -- that is, a good school for its students each year because it has a planning-evaluating system that ensures the very best effort of which the school and community is capable. It will not become a school with a set-in-concrete program and organization because it is continually responding to the educational needs of its students through utilization of the creative efforts of its faculty, leadership, and community associates.

Forces Affecting Future Directions

Some of the particular forces which affect the direction in which middle schools develop are shown in the accompanying chart. In general these are seen as forces relating both to individual middle schools, and in the aggregate to the middle school movement.

The Actions Needed

Obviously, the way to move middle schools in the right direction, if one accepts the preceding analysis, is to eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive. Specifically, such actions as these seem to be demanded of middle schools and their supporting and controlling bodies:

1. Plan and utilize as fully as possible programs of inservice faculty and leadership development for operation of ever-emergent, student-centered middle schools.

2. Work with teacher education institutions and state certification agencies to secure expanded and better programs of preservice teacher education and teacher certification, as required, for middle school education.

3. Involve community participation in planning new middle schools, in planning and evaluating programs of all middle schools, and in providing community resources for an effective middle school program.

4. Develop costs analyses for defined middle school programs and work with responsible groups for securing budgets needed.

FORCES AFFECTING THE GOAL OF DEVELOPING
EVER-EMERGENT, STUDENT-CENTERED MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Away from Goal	Force Number	Toward Goal	GOAL
Lack of middle school teacher education and certification	1	Preservice and inservice middle school teacher education	
Lack of leadership training for middle school education	2	Preservice and inservice leadership training for middle school education	
Lack of community involvement in planning and operating middle schools	3	Community participation in planning and operating middle schools	
Inadequate budget for a middle school program	4	Carefully developed budget to meet priorities in middle school program	

FORCES AFFECTING THE GOAL OF DEVELOPING
EVER-EMERGENT, STUDENT-CENTERED MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Away from Goal	Force Number	Toward Goal	GOAL
Failure to define and/or use statement of school goals	5	Plan for stating, using, and redefining school goals	
Evaluation/accreditation of middle schools by elementary/junior high school criteria	6	Evaluation of middle schools by flexible guidelines for middle schools	
Planning of middle school programs without consultation of elementary and high school representatives	7	Planning of education from school entry to exit by representatives of all levels	
Lack of systematic evaluation of middle school programs and their elements	8	Plan of middle school program evaluation, providing frequent feedback from students, parents, and others	

FORCES AFFECTING THE GOAL OF DEVELOPING
EVER-EMERGENT, STUDENT-CENTERED MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Away from Goal	Force Number	Toward Goal	GOAL
Lack of an adequate curriculum plan for each middle school	9	Personnel and time for planning each school's curriculum	
Lack of comprehensive data regarding the school's curriculum	10	System for gathering and using data about the school's population	
Little communication and sharing among middle schools	11	Leagues, clearinghouses, exchanges for middle schools	
Short-term, inadequate reorganization without fundamental focus on goal	12	Long-term preplanning and continuing planning, evaluation, and re-planning toward goal	

5. Set up goal statements for each middle school, along with provisions for using these goals in program planning and evaluation, and for their annual review and needed revision.

6. Determine state and/or local guidelines that can be used with flexibility for evaluating individual middle schools, along with plans for utilizing the guidelines and evaluation results in continuing improvement.

7. For each school district organize appropriate vertical curriculum planning groups to develop curriculum plans for students from school entry to school exit, these plans to indicate goals and continuums rather than arbitrary assignment of curriculum content to grade levels.

8. For each school establish a system of continuing evaluation that yields frequent feedback from students, parents, and others, with a plan for use of the feedback.

9. For continuing planning and improvement of the school program, provide adequate time and personnel and facilities.

10. Maintain a system for inventory of each year's student population as to critical characteristics, and for continuing diagnosis and assessment of students in skills and other areas in which continuous learner progress in sought.

In addition, any middle school faculty can help and be helped by affiliation with other middle schools through leagues of schools, clearinghouse services and other arrangements to facilitate inter-school sharing and stimulation. Exchanges of personnel between schools, intervisitation, operation of dissemination services, "show-and-tell" programs at conferences can help involved faculty share and critique ideas and practices. Continued learning on the part of middle school educators is essential to the continued learning of middle school students.

Basically, the critical difference between middle schools that become and remain responsive to student needs and those that do not lies in the focus, quality, and continuity of school planning. The combination of goals focused on students and their needs, adequate initial planning, and procedures for continuing evaluation and renewal can keep middle schools ever emergent and student-centered.

ISSUES AND ANSWERS

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL
TRENDS AND TROUBLE SPOTS

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Introduction

The middle school has emerged! The middle school trend has subsided! There is no difference between the middle school and the junior high school! The middle school is alive and well! The junior high school is dead! Middle school: Myth, Mania, or Mission! Why don't elementary principals raise hell? The middle school comes along and takes another grade to two! Will the middle school replace the junior high school completely?

These phrases and statements, all of which have been used as descriptors of middle school education, help to provide us with evidence that there are trends and trouble spots in the area of middle education. In just more than twenty years, the middle school movement has created a stir in American education which has not been experienced since the idea of the junior high school was introduced. Are we experiencing a revolution in American education, or are we experiencing an evolution in which an educational entity is in the process of becoming? The middle school movement has gained notoriety, from those who have worked for its acceptance, and from those who continue to view it as an educational fraud.

The purpose of this look at middle school education is threefold: to provide some observations about emerging trends in the movement, to examine some trouble spots, and to consider some alternatives concerning the future of middle schools in America and other countries.

The Middle School: Trends

Growth in numbers is one very significant trend. Alexander (1968) provided statistics which showed that approximately 1100 middle schools were operational. Kealy (1971) followed the Alexander study and located nearly 2300 middle schools in 1970. Several years later, Compton (1974) published a report on the growth of middle schools in the United States which showed that more than 3700 middle schools can be found in operation across the nation. Although the numbers are not currently available, it is known that middle schools exist in Canada, the Netherlands, Greece, and Great Britain, and in other European nations.

Surveys (Sinks, 1977) conducted in the upper midwest area since 1970, on three year intervals, indicate that the number of middle schools there has grown from approximately 220 to more than 900 in a six year period. This kind of growth may not be experienced in the next six years, but it seems apparent that the middle school movement is indeed alive and well, with every indication of continued growth.

The training and certification of teachers for the middle grades is another of the most significant of the trends in middle school education. A

survey conducted by Pumerantz (1968) showed that only two states, Kentucky and Nebraska, provided a certification program for middle school teachers. In a later survey (George, 1975), data showed that eight states reported such a certification, and some fourteen others are planning a middle grade certification. For many years, there have been articles written and presentations made emphasizing the need for programs designed to train teachers for the middle grades. It appears that the trend is becoming widespread.

It stands to reason that if such preparation programs are being implemented for beginning teachers, there will be a trend in course-work for the existing middle grade teachers. The success of the middle school movement is due, in large part, to the teachers who, trained as secondary and elementary teachers, have dedicated themselves to the continued improvement of quality educational experiences for emerging adolescents.

One of the most gratifying trends occuring in middle school education is the re-examination of philosophy and program in the middle schools which came into existence during the bandwagon middle school era. It is common knowledge that many middle schools became a reality during a time when the name of the school was changed, a grade was added, but there was very little planning for a conversion to the philosophy of middle school education. The trend is evident; over the past five years, as Director of the National Middle School Resource Center, I have received a large amount of positive correspondence indicating this revitalization. Many of the bandwagon middle schools are now making a concerted effort to change the program, moving from the minimal changes which occurred originally to the creation of a real program for middle school students.

The revision of the curriculum promises to continue. One reason that middle schools have been criticized, with some justification, is that many middle school schedules are built around required subjects for all students. This is an indication of the ancestry of the junior high school setting, in which elective courses were and are minimal.

An indicator of a trend toward the inclusion of more elective, exploratory, and student centered courses is that in the midwest survey (Sinks, 1977) there is a significant reduction in the number of required courses in middle schools. Perhaps we are beginning to move toward the ideals which have been discussed for many years by middle school advocates, i.e., that a balanced curriculum which includes elective, exploratory, and student-centered activities, differentiates a middle school from a traditional junior high school. It may be that in the middle school, we are learning to teach our students in a manner which allows for more flexibility in the creation of an appropriate schedule and an appropriate curriculum.

In another trend, it appears that the middle school movement is beginning to find recognition in the eyes of several professional organizations. This must be considered a positive trend because it seems appropriate for all of us who are involved in the future of American education to work together in a spirit of unity in order to realize some of the goals which have been established and which we constantly strive to achieve.

Middle school education has received support from such organizations as the National Elementary School Principals Association (1971), which devoted an entire edition of one of their journals to middle schools. The National Association of

Secondary School Principals (1974) has published a journal concerning middle school education. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1974) has devoted both publicity and resources to the middle school movement through the publication of Middle School in the Making, and the Middle School We Need, and through its Working Group for Emerging Adolescent Learners. The National Study of School Evaluation is now in the process of revising their evaluative criteria for middle schools and junior high schools to incorporate a greater emphasis on middle schools.

The National Middle School Association has become a positive factor in the further recognition and growth of the middle school movement. Since a study of middle school education made by Mellinger and Raskauskas (1970) indicated in the concluding statements that there was need for a national middle school organization, NMSA membership has risen to over 1000, and some thirteen state and regional middle school organizations are functioning effectively. It is anticipated that more states will join this trend, and possibly in the not too distant future every state will boast an organization devoted to the extension of effective programs for middle school students.

The trends in middle school education seem to indicate increasing interest and involvement in the education of emerging adolescent learners. Although the movement is comparatively new, it may well represent the best hope for the future for many educators, students, and parents who are both interested and involved in middle school education.

The Middle School: Trouble Spots

One trouble spot for the middle school involves the lack of positive research. In this day of accountability, test results, and other influences, it seems that we in the middle should consider the kinds of research which will help provide evidence that the middle school concept is succeeding. In each classroom, school and school district there are opportunities to engage in research which will help solidify the existence of the middle school program. Each of us would like to believe that we are successful in working with our students; however, there exists a need to prove success as well as think success.

One avenue which merits consideration is the submission of proposals to the offices of ESEA, Title IV-C. This division is based on funding of prospective innovative and exemplary programs in education, and positive program results are shared with educators across the nation through a dissemination network. I believe that some positive evaluative results would be of great assistance to educators involved in middle school planning, and negative results could be of value in terms of altering programs which do not prove themselves.

A troublesome financial crunch is being felt in many communities and middle school people should be especially concerned. Many of our middle schools were implemented in existing facilities, using existing staff, and with a minimal commitment of funds for inservice and additional materials and personnel. Some people have the illusion that a middle school does not need money to exist. This is a trouble spot.

An effective program of preservice and inservice training is imperative. The purchase of equipment and materials is essential. Building renovation and possible new construction are definite factors in effective middle school programs. The program for middle education must be considered as an equal partner with the secondary and the elementary programs, and must be funded to insure it.

There appears to be evidence of a conflict between supporters of the junior high school and middle school proponents. This conflict is evident in securing membership in an organization, internal fighting to secure a particular position, and possible fear of loss of stature in a particular group.

Perhaps it is time to have organizations join forces, since recognition has been given to the middle school movement by other groups. Certainly, all who are truly interested in the education of middle grade students can benefit from the expertise of others. It is not in the best interest of our clientele to continue a struggle over divided allegiances when programs and students suffer because of internal conflict. The name of the school is not nearly as important as the program which is being conducted inside of the school. Membership in one organization does not exclude participating in and working with educators in another organization. This is a trouble spot because it does nothing except to add fuel for the fires of those who are not in accord with middle school education.

If the middle school concept is a defined program of instruction for a unique group of students, then we must be concerned with the pressures stemming from the advocates of "back to the basics." If we are to attempt to conduct a middle

school program based entirely on "readin, writin, and ciperhin", then I believe we do an injustice to the real philosophy of the middle school. What opportunities will we be able to provide for students in such areas as self-expression, electives, and exploratory experiences?

No educator will deny the need for basic skill development throughout the K-12 continuum, as it appears that survival skills remain a necessity. Even in 1977, approximately one third of all students entering high school do not complete their secondary school experience. In the middle grades, we must continue efforts in the area of basic learnings, but not to the extent of sacrificing all of the educational values derived from a living middle school experience which emphasizes more than simply basic concepts.

A medical study conducted by Dr. Herman Epstein (Toepfer, 1976), of Brandeis University, concludes that approximately 85% of students in the age group 12-14 experience minimal or no real brain growth during that period. If a plateau occurs when the emerging adolescent experiences pubertal changes, there are definite implications for middle school education. We need to be aware of the consequences which might be experienced by students as a result of our search for continual cognitive growth in this age group. Might we instead, be wise to focus on the remediation and refinement of skills mastered during earlier years?

Why should basic concepts, which may or may not be attained in the middle years, lessen emphasis on experimentation, exploration, and refinement, which seems to be an integral part of the middle school philosophy? Dr. William Glasser (1977), known nationally for the development of reality therapy,

noted in a presentation at the 1977 annual conference of the Michigan Association of Middle School Educators that students in the middle school years are in an educational holding pattern in terms of learning and behavior, yet many attempt to interfere with this holding pattern in favor of "back to the basics."

In many cases, out of necessity, middle school advocates have had to fight for every inch of ground in the attempt to implement an effective middle school program. The struggle among elementary, middle and secondary educators continues to exist. The result is that the middle unit remains a fragmented part of the total school program. It appears imperative that local school officials, parents, teachers, and students, grasp a proper perspective of total education.

The middle school is an imperative portion of the total school program, and must receive proper recognition. In some communities, where a continuing effort is made toward excellence in the articulation process, and where emphasis is placed on the development of the total K-12 program, the middle school is, indeed, recognized as an educational entity.

Conclusion

It is apparent that the middle school movement is a reality. Middle schools continue to increase in numbers and quality with each passing year. It is not impossible to envision ten thousand middle schools within the next decade. Everyone participating in middle school education must be aware of the emerging trends and trouble spots in middle school education which can enhance or interfere with the development of productive programs for emerging adolescents. Also, we must not lose sight of the original philosophy of middle school education, and must constantly attempt to work toward the successful implementation of that philosophy. Middle school educators

should not be pressured into making changes which might endanger the effectiveness of the total school program, and must be willing and able to defend those programs which have been successful.

In order to achieve positive middle school goals, total involvement is necessary. We must include not only teachers, and principals, but school board members, parents, state department personnel, college and university personnel, and students, all of whom are necessary for progress in middle school education.

The middle school movement is just getting started and appears to be on the verge of "becoming." The most important variable to keep in mind may be people, because programs do not work. People do. The people involved in the middle school movement may represent the key to success or the reason for failure. The middle school movement may rightfully aspire to greatness, but if so it is the responsibility of all of us to help provide the impetus which will allow the middle school to achieve its goals.

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THE MIDDLE SCHOOL: ISSUES AND ACTION PLANS

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Unresolved Issues

During the past decade middle school education has proven to be an attractive alternative for those interested in intermediate education. In moving from a conceptual toward a programmatic orientation, however, the momentum of the middle school movement is threatened by three unresolved issues. These issues must be resolved before programs in the middle grades will reflect the ideals espoused in the literature.

First, there must be a renewed attempt to communicate the philosophical implications of the educational design to those who are attempting to develop middle schools. Perhaps the greatest difficulty now facing the middle school movement is the lack of understanding of why middle schools were first established. Basically, the origin of the middle school can be traced to the inability of the junior high school to meet the developmental needs of students in preadolescence. The middle school advocates a broad and student-centered program

of education. This orientation redefines the purpose of educating by placing the developmental focus on the individual student. Implementing a middle school without this basic understanding is folly.

Second, there is a tremendous need to overcome a damaging gap between theory and practice in middle school education. Because of the complexity of a student-centered learning design, the multifaceted concerns of middle school education are regularly overwhelming. There is a desire for clearer direction in the pursuit of the middle school; a need to ferret out the essential elements of middle school education and to distinguish between conceptual intention and operational organization. While no simple formula exists for the true middle school, the lack of clarity in basic goal direction precludes orderly development of programs. In its present form, the design of the middle school approaches theoretical fantasy when superimposed on day-to-day operations of an intermediate school.

Third, it is imperative that the middle school movement establish evaluative criteria which will serve to rationalize and justify this more sophisticated definition of education. To date, evaluation of middle school programs has proven to the Achilles heel of the movement; a point of access for critics of the design. We must show that our "plus curriculum" does make a difference in the lives of preadolescents. We must do so to justify the expense and effort needed to provide such a program of education. Evaluation of middle school education, thus far, is far from conclusive.

In approaching evaluation, we must become aware of a dilemma for the middle school which is inherent in its design. Because the middle school is

dedicated to individual growth and development, norm-referenced or standardized evaluative criteria are not applicable to our long-term goals for students. The orientation of the middle school is not to uniformity, but rather to flexibility and diversity. We must conceive of ways to demonstrate middle school achievements and draw greater correspondence between program objectives and instrumentation.

These, then, are the crucial issues confronting middle school education. If the middle school movement is able to more clearly focus the philosophical intention of the educational design, if it is able to develop more utilitarian vehicles for the dissemination of ideas and practices, and if it is capable of establishing evaluation measures which support the programs, the longevity of the movement is probably guaranteed. Under these circumstances, the middle school will continue as a viable alternative to the traditional content-oriented designs of this nation. With the resolution of these considerations, the middle school movement can move from a quantitative orientation to one more primarily concerned with program form and substance.

If the middle school movement fails to address these issues, a very different future may be in store. It can be anticipated, for instance, that the number of middle schools will continue to increase as the movement sweeps across our nation. With size can come the dilution of both definition and purpose. Guidelines for the development of middle schools, already in abundance, will become less relevant as new middle schools do it their own way. Without specific evaluative criteria, middle schools will be vunerable to unfavorable comparisons with educational designs constructed to promote sameness among students. Theoretical brushfires among middle school advocates, such as the current concern over "back to the basics" will sap organizational energies. In the end, middle school

education will be a cliche rather than an ideal and yet another attempt will be initiated to meet the needs of students in the middle.

Action Plans

While the issues related to the communication, demonstration, and evaluation of middle school principles and practices are real, they are not insoluable. Current activities at national and state conferences on middle school education, and the concerns of districts and schools at the local level, indicate an acknowledgement of these problems. The following suggested action steps represent this author's thinking about these issues based on seven years of interest in middle school education:

In clarifying the intentions of the middle school philosophy, it seems necessary for state and national middle school organizations to clearly identify distinct characteristics of middle school programs and to contrast them with other forms of intermediate education. While this strategy of distinction has been purposefully avoided in the past to enable middle schools to become established, the middle school movement is now threatened by its lack of identity. The emergence stage of middle school education is complete; its survival is assured by numbers alone.

A second action related to the intention or philosophy of middle school programs is for practitioners in middle school education to prioritize their concerns and needs. Obviously, the development of sound middle school programs is a long-term prospect. In working under the constraint of diminishing resources, program leaders must have

clear value priorities in order to realistically meet goals. In many cases, the multiple concerns of middle school education are treated equally, thereby creating difficult resource allocation problems.

In dealing with the very real theory-practice gap in middle school education, it appears essential that persons working at a conceptual level address themselves to the implementation of those concepts which comprise the middle school design. There must be utilitarian vehicles developed which will allow those who are attracted to the ideas of the middle school to translate such ideas into practice. Guidelines for development of programs are called for. Such guidelines must be practical!

There is also a great need for the identification and validation of model middle schools throughout the country. At the state level, directories of exemplary school programs can be developed, and visits and teacher exchanges encouraged. At the national level the very best programs in existence should be illuminated. While not an attempt to identify criteria for sameness among developed middle schools, this recommendation does acknowledge the simple fact that school visitation remains one of the most common methods of learning about middle schools. Outstanding schools which are identified, validated, and prepared for visitation will demonstrate the viable connection between middle school theory and practice.

In the area of evaluation, there is a definite need to address the lack of correspondence between middle school objectives, experiences, and instrumentation. A beginning point in this area would be to survey and gain concensus among middle school educators concerning the categories of things to be assessed. This activity might also prove useful in drawing closure on the definition of programs in middle school education.

A related recommendation for action in the area of evaluation is the establishment of a development and evaluation center for middle school education which would enable individual middle schools throughout the country to share ideas and instruments found particularly helpful in assessing middle school programs and students. Such a center, to be effective, would need a significant fiscal base of support.

In summary, it can be said that middle school education in America will continue to grow even if the issues identified in this paper are not confronted by those concerned with this movement. However, if major issues such as these are not addressed by existing leadership within the middle school movement, the outcome of this major attempt to reform intermediate education in America will be left to situational variables rather than planning. To one individual who believes in the ends being pursued by middle school educators throughout this nation, taking the action steps needed to address the issues seems worth the effort. The challenge is to determine the future of this exciting educational development.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL TOMORROW: THREE PERENNIAL PROBLEMS

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The middle school movement in the United States has reached a crucial stage in its development. From an inchoate framework of ideas and theories it has moved through the last fifteen years to a position of being accepted by many, if not most, educators as an appropriate organizational approach to the education of emerging adolescents. This development, which is the strength of the middle school, can also be its weakness. The more people who recognize and accept the concept, the more there are who may accept it in ill-defined ways or for invalid reasons. Thus, one school board may accept personalization of education of emerging adolescents as the framework for initiating a middle school, while other boards may utilize a new building or integration as justification. In other words, the more widespread a concept becomes the more diffuse it may also become. Under these circumstances, it becomes the task of educators most concerned with middle schools to state in unequivocal terms their beliefs concerning issues and actions most important to the continued development of middle school education.

Significant Issues in Middle School Education

Only three issues will be explored in this paper. While many others might be considered for discussion, the following have been selected because of their value as current issues which must be resolved in order for the middle school to progress. Those who are new to the middle school movement may find these issues esoteric, but educators who have moved forward with the middle school movement for some time should find them current.

Uniqueness of the Middle School

A major issue in the future of the middle school movement is the question of the uniqueness of the middle school concept as opposed to other organizational arrangements, be they K-12, 7-9, or any other. The middle school is unique only as it relates to the needs of emerging adolescents. The three most common methods by which it can accomplish this are: (1) by serving a transitional function in the social development of the emerging adolescent from child to adolescent, (2) by developing learning styles from the concrete elementary mode to more formal methods utilized in secondary schools, and (3) by accepting the vast variation among and between youth at this stage in their development. The primary premise of those concerned with the middle school concept should be the unique nature of the emerging adolescent, rather than any organizational arrangement which might be sought for other practical or theoretical purposes.

The uniqueness of the middle school should rest primarily upon personalization, i.e., that education which meets the needs, purposes, and desires of the

individual. This term does not indicate any sort of instructional methodology dealing with one pupil at a time, but is rather related to treating each individual as a unique entity. All individuals have needs both shallow and profound, which should be met by the middle school to as great a degree as possible, even though these needs may not be readily evident to the pupil. None of these aspects of personalization can be ignored if education for emerging adolescents is indeed to have precedence in middle school education.

Increasing emphasis should be placed upon the socio-emotional and physical development of emerging adolescents in the ideal middle school of the future. Due to the variability within and among emerging adolescents much attention must be given to the social and emotional development of individuals. Considerable research has been conducted on the emerging adolescent psyche which indicates a need for more concern with instructional techniques designed most effectively to meet needs and foster emotional growth. Research has also been conducted on psychomotor development of emerging adolescents which indicates a need for greater emphasis upon physical development at this most crucial period in the growth of the human being.

Much attention will be given, in the area of cognitive development, to developing learning skills as opposed to a mere gathering of knowledge. Subject matter will be correlated into more meaningful areas of study such as ecology, aesthetics, career education, values education, etc. Content which has no purpose in the lives of individuals will be deleted. Thus a major criticism of the middle school curriculum, that it is overcrowded with content, may be alleviated. This conclusion should not be construed to indicate any lessening of the rigor involved in middle school education, but rather an increase in

stress on learning skills and reasons for the importance of content knowledge. Traditional subject matter areas may thus assume greater import due to their utilization as tools in achieving the needs, purposes, and desires of individual pupils.

General Education vs. High School Preparation

A second issue which must be considered is whether a middle school should serve as a culmination of general education for American youth, or as a preparatory institution for secondary school. The framework of general education (that education needed by all) would seem to be crucial. If high school is primarily academic in nature in preparation for collegiate work, and elementary school is general education for all, and if the middle school serves as a transition between elementary and high school, then the middle school must serve many purposes of general education as well as those of high school preparation.

Futurists have suggested that within a few decades at most, the required age for school attendance will be lowered to 14 years of age. Such a requirement, if it should come to pass, would mean that the middle school would serve as the culmination of formal general education, with further learning dependent upon the needs and desires of the adolescent or adult. Such an outcome may, at first glance, seem unfortunate, but more careful analysis would indicate that this would place the middle school in the position which most adherents would see as appropriate -- the culminating component of general education for all. Under these circumstances the middle school could function as the capstone of that education needed by all individuals in order to function effectively in our society. It would not have to serve merely as a preparatory institution for an academic future which, in many instances, is inappropriate for a majority of pupils.

A truly transitional school must, while meeting these needs for general education, also meet more specific needs of individuals. Some students, probably most, will continue into the secondary schools as a gateway to personal enrichment and future careers. Thus, a viable curriculum for the middle school to meet the demands of both general education and high school preparation would include skills and concepts needed by all, plus specific knowledges and attitudes unique to certain purposes of individuals, whether these be secondary school preparation (for most), culminating educational experiences, or general personal enrichment.

Individual vs. Societal Needs

The third major issue is whether the needs of the individual or the needs of society are to be considered paramount. The proponents of the personal needs approach contend that the best way for a society to improve is for each individual in that society to improve, thus creating a higher norm. Proponents of the societal needs approach contend that individuals must be acquainted with our cultural heritage and prepared to contribute to its further development. The first position is to educate the child where he is for his current life situation, and the second is to educate him for his future life. This issue will become increasingly important as the American culture continues to change.

Middle schools committed to the needs of the individual would place greater stress on experiences in such areas as exploration and learning processes, with particular stress upon affective processes including valuing and creativity, among others. Under these circumstances stress would be placed upon meeting the present needs of pupils within the culture of the school.

Others would have emerging adolescents undergo a learning experience in which they would be indoctrinated into the total society with predominant emphasis upon adult cultural values, adapting the youth of the nation to the society by means of their school experiences. Such experiences might include among others, strong emphasis upon societally accepted values and knowledge essential to adult living. To simplify the issue, should emerging adolescents be educated to live in their current society of adolescence or for the adult culture in which they find themselves?

Next Steps

The development of a model education for emerging adolescents is an extremely complex task, requiring statesmanship of a high caliber. Simple answers to the issues will serve only to further complicate the matter. The crucial aspect in consideration of these issues is the necessity for developing responses which are unique to the particular needs of each school district. Such an approach does not negate the necessity for the development of a widespread consensus on the definition of the middle school program, or criteria for use in the evaluation of that program. What it does mean is that each school district must discern how these variables can be considered in relation to each other in the development of a model system on the local level.

In order to achieve the required level of educational statesmanship the primary need is for the development of knowledge. Everyone involved in the development and continuing progress of a middle school, e.g. school board members, administrators, teachers, pupils, patrons, etc., must be aware of the

aforementioned definitions, goals, and criteria. Means for achieving this development of knowledge are, to some extent, dependent upon the unique situation of the school district involved. Some thoughts which should be seriously developed are the need for pre-and inservice education of teachers concerning emerging adolescents: their needs, purposes, desires, in addition to their characteristics and educational means by which they can best be reached. The same type of education on a more individualized basis should take place with administrators and school board members. A successful middle school must also involve a community, including parents and other patrons. Emerging adolescents must also be made aware of the purposes of the middle schools. Individuals learn best when they are involved in the development of the objectives for their own learning.

A last thought includes the necessity for pupil and curricular evaluation and research. Pupils, after being made aware of the objectives for which they are responsible, should be measured upon the achievement of those objectives, but these objectives should include affective and psychomotor domains as well as the more traditional cognitive domain. If the majority of pupils are not achieving the objectives it might become a question for the administration and faculty to determine whether curricular experiences are at fault rather than inherent weaknesses of the pupils.

As an aide to the future development of the middle school, appropriate research must be conducted. Such research could include the common empirical survey type, statistically-oriented research, and case studies.

Research on physiological development has taken place and should increase. Sociological and emotional studies of early adolescence, along with analyses of classroom activities are further areas for research. The middle school began with a wave of almost evangelical fervor, with a regrettable lack of rigorous research studies to support it. Such research studies are just beginning to appear and must be increased in numbers in the near future in order to justify that which we believe and see in the subjective evidence supporting the middle school. Middle schools have developed to an amazing degree in the last fifteen years. Their future seems to be equally bright.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL TODAY - PROLOGUE OR EPILOGUE?

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Introduction

The advent of the junior high school movement in Berkeley, California, in 1910 ushered in a period of what seemed to be a movement of major promise in education. However, the ensuing several decades witnessed a steady erosion of this once promising idea, and by the late 50's the disillusionment of many educators led them to consider alternative approaches to education for the critical early or preadolescent school years. The resulting discussions and analyses of the still unmet needs of students in the years between the firmly entrenched elementary grades and the equally solidly established secondary school grades took the direction of the creation of the middle school concept.

Central to this concept was the paramount concern for meeting the unique needs of students who possessed a set of developmental characteristics which could not be met satisfactorily with either the existing elementary or secondary school programs.

Thus, the basis of the middle school concept was a humanistic one. All other considerations such as buildings, equipment, curriculum, organization, staffing, instructional methodology, etc., stemmed from this central concern for the nature of the youth involved. During the 1960's and 1970's, the middle school movement enjoyed a period of rapid growth and expansion as attested to by the increasing numbers of communities adopting this educational approach.

Accompanying the rapid growth of the middle school movement was the frequent appearance on the scene of schools which bore the title "Middle School" but which offered little else to justify the title. Programs in some schools persisted in a traditional approach to curriculum and organization without adequate consideration for the unique developmental characteristics of the youth they served. As a result, a kind of educational watershed seems to have developed, and the future of the middle school movement hinges upon the actions which will be taken and the plans which will be made in the coming years. Acceptance of a cosmetic change, i.e., in title only, will result in middle schools which may be highly departmentalized, content-oriented, and mechanistic in their instructional methodology with little regard for individual or group characteristics and needs. If the middle school movement is to survive as it was originally conceived and to fulfill its early promise, then careful attention must be given to assuring that the basis for planning curriculum, staffing and organization should continue to be the physical, mental, emotional and psycho-social characteristics of the emerging adolescent.

Obstacles to Growth

There are several serious obstacles to the desired continued growth and development of the middle school movement. One of these is the rapidity with which the movement is growing. Inherent in such rapid growth is the danger of the bandwagon effect whereby schools simply and superficially change titles and little more. The result is likely to be disillusionment on the part of the staff, dissatisfaction on the part of the community, and rapid disenchantment on the part of the students.

A second obstacle is one which stems from the declining school enrollments experienced by many school districts today. The result may be that high school staff on tenure and holding seniority, may be arbitrarily assigned to middle schools since there are not enough high school positions for them. In many instances, their lack of preparation for working in middle school programs would likely prove disastrous to those programs.

A third obstacle is found in the growing concern for academic accountability which could result in a content-centered curriculum in the middle school and a diminished concern for the important humanistic development; for the affective domain of pupil growth.

A fourth obstacle is the frequent tendency in any movement to level-off and for people to develop a feeling of complacency, a satisfaction with the status quo. Without continued dialogue and analysis the middle school movement may very well suffer the same fate of stagnation which overtook the earlier junior high school movement.

Necessary Actions

To counter these restrictive forces and to assure the continued growth and refinement of the middle school movement, several actions are essential in assuring that the central concern of the middle school and the people who staff it will continue to be the welfare of the students in schools designated as middle schools.

1. As a substantial, supportable and viable organizational unit in the education ladder, the teachers and administrators who staff the middle school will need to receive the training and preparation necessary to their task of working with preadolescent and early adolescent youth. This means a solid background in the study of human growth and development of students in this period of life. It also means the study of curricular planning, organizational procedures and instructional methodologies which are appropriate for these students. The task is one which must be borne not only by the teacher training institutions in preservice education programs but by school districts as well in carrying on continuous inservice education activities for staff members. Both teacher training institutions and local school districts need to work together in a well-coordinated program for the initial and continuous development of qualified, competent middle school staff members.

2. The role of the state departments of education in certificating teachers and principals is intended to assure fully qualified educational personnel for our schools. At present, only eight states provide for the specific

certification of middle school personnel. If the middle school movement is to continue to grow and develop, these eight states must be joined by the remainder in the country in recognizing the importance of having educators who are fully qualified in staffing our middle schools.

3. Both the expanding scope of education in an increasingly complex society and the growing assertion of the public in the operation of its schools make it imperative that middle schools be community-oriented. It is no longer possible, if indeed it ever was, for schools to conceive of planning and carrying on programs without regard for the larger community setting for the school. The middle school must maintain an open ended position with regard to its relationship with the community, not only for the practical and political reasons cited previously but because widespread involvement in educational planning benefits both the quality of the program and the relationships among the teachers and the parents involved in such joint planning.

4. Goal setting and evaluation in the middle school are crucial areas for decision-making. The entire nature of the middle school program is largely determined by these activities. If the middle school is to retain its humanistic nature, concerned with young people's needs and interests, then these must be reflected in the goals established for the school program. Similarly, the evaluation which is planned for the middle school must be concerned not only with academic achievement but also with other equally important areas of growth and development ascribed to the affective domain.

5. The continued growth and refinement of the middle school movement will also depend on the extent to which discussion, thought, analysis and study are carried on. Perhaps what is needed is a conscious and studied effort to cultivate the Hawthorne effect among middle school educators. The presence of a strong National Middle School Association and thriving state middle school associations provide excellent forums for the kinds of activities needed to exchange views, ideas, practices and materials The establishment of the Middle School Journal and the growing research and writing activities on many university campuses add to the increasing volume and quality of the literature available on the middle school.

One area deserving increased attention is that of research on the middle school. Much of what has been written is of a subjective nature and while this is valuable and necessary, it is not sufficient. More needs to be done using a scientific approach, utilizing an objective research process. For example, studies dealing with the effects of middle school programs on learning and growth are needed, to add substantiation to the case for the existence of the middle school. In addition, state, regional, and national conferences afford growing numbers of participants opportunities to meet, discuss and plan together better ways of educating our pre and early adolescent youth. Conferences need to be firmly established on a continuing basis to permit systematic study of salient problems on a long term basis. In addition, conferences of this nature serve a valuable purpose in nurturing latent leadership among participants, a leadership which is imperative in the continuing growth of the middle school movement.

Certainly, the road ahead for the middle school is one liberally sprinkled with rocks and boulders. Continued progress for the middle school movement depends on continued concern with the primary purpose of schools, i.e., the education of children and youth, and with the making of decisions and plans which facilitate the education we seek rather than continuing to operate our schools as we often have in the past, without question or justification.

PART TWO

RENEWING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL MOVEMENT: INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

Each of the contributors to Part Two of the bulletin responded to the editor's invitation in a different way than the authors in Part One. These writers have attached special significance to single issues; each different, each seen as central by the author. One group focuses on the students or teachers in the school as the touchstone of future improvements. A second identifies several processes as keys to forward movement in middle school education.

Among those who focus on people, Donald Eichhorn continues his decade-long attempt to keep the characteristics of students at the center of the decision-making, curriculum-building process. Mary Compton, essentially in agreement with this idea, argues forcefully for increased attention to the physical needs of transescents. Kenneth McEwin pursues a different position, that the future of the middle school depends primarily upon the teacher education process, at both preservice and inservice phases.

Gordon Vars, Conrad Toepfer, and John Lounsbury each possess a well deserved reputation for insightfulness in the area of curriculum and instruction, including but also extending far beyond the middle school. It is fitting, therefore, that each of these writers singles out a particular process for special consideration. Vars argues for an increasing emphasis on teacher-student planning as the fulchrum on which the future will move. Toepfer identifies the centrality of local effort in curriculum planning, decrying an attempt at standardization of the middle school. Lounsbury writes forcefully for a departure

from the beaucratic cost-energy efficiency models which have, he states, produced the factory system our schools resemble.

Readers will no doubt find themselves in agreement with each of the authors in the two sections, that the key to the future lies in giving priority to the factor which he or she has identified. Resolving such a dilemma is one of the tasks in each of our individual futures.

THE PEOPLE IN THE SCHOOL

MIDDLE SCHOOL LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS: THE KEY TO ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

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Introduction

It is vital, perhaps urgent, to consider the middle school in the context of alternatives. In itself, the basic notion of this school has been an alternative. Historically, its proponents have viewed the school as a unique level of schooling while its detractors have considered it an unnecessary intrusion.

The difficulties inherent in middle school education emanate mainly from the conflict surrounding these divergent points of view. Areas such as state recognition, teacher education, teacher acceptance, and parental attitude are outgrowths of a lack of clear acceptance of the uniqueness of the age group as well as the instructional programs which purport to serve this group of youngsters.

Despite occasional disagreement the idea of a middle level of education, distinct from the elementary and high school levels of schooling, has persisted. It is an idea which has survived the constant philosophic battle between humanists and behaviorists. It is an idea which has overcome ineptness and ignorance. It is an idea which has remained dynamic even when school programs, well intentioned but ill-conceived, have threatened its existence. It is an idea which began over seventy years ago, yet remains viable today.

As we consider the future, educators need to examine the past; for in the past there are clues to the future. Why has the idea remained so vibrant while a succession of attempts at constructing programs have only had minimal success?

At the National Middle School Leadership Seminar, held in Gainesville, Florida in the Spring of 1976, many crucial issues were identified. These issues ranged from the practical to the philosophic. These issues, while still pertinent in 1977, appear to be consistent with issues raised in past discussions related to junior high-middle school education. The following issue identified at the Gainesville Conference, for example, is still troublesome: "Why do so many middle schools start out so well and become mediocre so quickly?"

Student Characteristics and Program Deficiencies

Reflecting on the past, two separate strands seem particularly significant. The philosophic principles are specific and consistent, i.e., there is a unique group of youngsters in terms of

maturation for which a unique program is predicated. A second strand dealing with an assessment of its program implementation, however, indicates that the program has not accomplished its purpose.

The philosophic strand has been described by both practitioner and theoretician. Havighurst (1952) stated: "The period from twelve to eighteen is primarily one of physical and social maturing... the principle lessons are emotional and social, not intellectual." This writer (1966) defined the rationale of middle schools in terms of the concept of transescence.

> Transescence is defined as the stage of development which begins prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence. Since puberty does not occur for all precisely at the same chronological age in human development, the transescent designation is based upon the many physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes....

Vars (1967) said,

> Each individual grows according to his own timetable which varies from month to month and is not the same for all aspects of his development... a compounding of rapid change and highly variable growth patterns gives the middle school the most diverse student body of any such unit.

Toepfer (1971) said, "The realization that, as a group, emerging adolescent learners are distinctly different from either elementary or high school learners builds the logic that the middle unit of the school system must have an identity of its own."

Thus, the persistence of the middle school idea has its foundation in the maturational uniqueness of its students.

Over the years, we witness criticism of schools intended to serve this level. Landsittel (1929) commenting on the newly reorganized schools, stated, "The general showing is not to the credit of the junior high school; every really significant difference is against it." Noar (1969) added, "The junior high schools, originally founded to meet the need for education on a level intermediate between elementary school and high school, have generally been accused of falling short of helping children for whom they are designed."

Alexander (1969) summarized:

> Analysis of program and organizational arrangements of the schools in the sample showed that despite some interesting and promising exceptions, the new middle schools in most cases were so far failing to provide a program and institutional organization differing very much from those in the predecessor schools, especially in the grade 7-9 junior high school. In fact, many so called "new middle schools" appeared more like "junior, junior high schools."

While it appears since 1968, the latest middle school movement has made significant strides, the issue raised at the Gainesville Seminar, "Why do so many middle schools start out so well and become mediocre so quickly," reminds us that the concern is still a very pressing matter.

The middle school movement is rapidly moving toward a crucial point in its evaluation. As in the past, key decisions will have to be made regarding the practical implementation of its rationale. The school is dynamic, not static, and as an institution must either progress or regress. The direction of this movement, in my judgment, is the central issue to be considered. The past provides some interesting parallels in this regard.

By analyzing just a few of the vast physical, mental, and social-emotional characteristics which constitute the rationale of uniqueness and by subsequently considering how these characteristics have been treated educationally, one gains an insight into the possible choices for the future.

Physically, the onset of puberty stimulates rapid and diverse changes in the body. Stolz and Stolz (1944) remark:

> Usually between the ages of eight years and twelve years among girls and between nine years and thirteen years among boys there commences a sequence of changes in velocity of increase in height, body breadth and body depth, in heart size, lung capacity, muscular strength, and other structures and functions. This particular sequence of changes in the velocity of physical growth is unlike anything which has occurred before and unlike anything which comes afterward.

These changes in body development create for the youngster a vastly altered status. Awkwardness, lack of stamina, vulnerability of joints, changes in sexual characteristics and functions, and a disproportionate body appearance present the

transesecent with significant aspects with which to cope. This status significantly differs from childhood or adolescence and is unique to transescence. Compounding the problem is the variance of the age at which these developmental changes occur.

Faced with decision in light of these changes, schools in the middle have often chosen to disregard them. For example, students who are in the throes of physical development are placed in highly competitive situations with all of its attendant pressures. Teaching strategies emphasizing passive physical involvement have occurred irrespective of the restlessness caused by growth. Differences in rate of maturity have been disregarded in favor of rigid grade patterns and mandated student groupings based upon years in school.

Similarly, middle school students encounter complex emotional concerns which are directly related to physical growth. Strang (1957) said, "Biological changes give rise to physical sensations; these are translated into emotional states, which in turn may be expressed in social behavior. Slow or rapid growth, uneveness of growth, or abnormalities of growth may affect an adolescent's total development."

Generally, program has been quite inconsistent with emotional aspects of the middle school child. Angelo, Dollins and Mech (1956) state, "Certainly it is almost axiomatic to state that a child cannot be expected to do good school work, particularly in such problem solving activities as are required in academic skills, if he or she is emotionally disturbed, anxious, or worried. No human organism can perform at maximum efficiency under such a burden." Frank et. al. (1951) further emphasize this contention:

> The schools often make demands for sustained study and academic achievement and expect students to be actively interested in various subject matters and intellectual skills at a time just before and after puberty when most girls are least capable of meeting those demands and sustaining such interest except by sacrifice of what is of crucial importance to their maturation and at a phychological cost which may be excessive.

The growing incidence of suicide, the increasing use of alcohol and harmful drugs, and low achievement rates in this age group suggest a need for programs to reflect this aspect of uniqueness. No one should suggest that the school can possibly solve these problems in isolation, but school programs which have failed to consider this dimension in the past have not been effective.

From the earliest stages of thinking regarding this age, there has been a tendency to consider academic toughness, acceleration, and intensity without regard to emotional impact. Eliot's concern in the late 1800's for accelerating learning programs prompted program emphasis in this direction; however, it quickly became evident that it was not an effective pattern. Douglas and Grieder (1956) point out:

> The early exponents of reorganization were profoundly convinced that at least two years could be saved between the first grade and college graduation. This idea was given up though, and the ultimate outcome may be summed up as follows: Not the same education in less time, but better education in the same time.

The same pattern emerged in the early 1960's after Russia launched its first Sputnik. Neff (1966) stated:

> Bending particularly under the pressures of Bestor, Smith, et al. whose counter educational movement called Essentialism centered on a return to strict subject matter requirements, schools moved subject matter content of the high schools particularly in mathematics and science to lower grade levels.

Again, this was accomplished without regard to the impact on the emerging adolescent, and again it was found to be ineffective.

The current "Back to Basics" movement is obviously fueled by the growing reports of declining national achievement. Yet if one observes the fact that students in the early 60's were products of the "Back to Basic" movement of the 50's in which progressive education was rebuked, and students in the 70's are products of the post-sputnik push by essentialists, one must question whether the onus for declining scores rests solely with progressive educators. In fact, research data involving progressive schools has at times suggested the opposite. Butts (1955) stated regarding the "Eight Year Study":

> The first graduates of the progressive schools went to college in 1936, and a follow-up study was undertaken to see how well the whole group did in academic subjects, college life, and personal development. The evaluation staff under the direction of Ralph Tyler compared 1,475 graduates of the progressive schools with an equal number of students from traditional schools. Each progressive student was paired with one from a traditional high school of equivalent age,

sex, race, intelligence, scholastic achievement in high school, and general economic and social background.

By careful analysis, study and observation the evaluation staff discovered that the progressive students earned a slightly higher total average of grades in college and more academic and non academic honors than the traditional students. The progressive students were more often judged to possess a high degree of intellectual curiosity and drive, to be precise, systematic, and objective in their thinking, to demonstrate a high degree of resourcefulness in meeting new situations...and to have developed a better orientation toward the choice of a vocation....

Certainly, it is not suggested that we deemphasize student acquisition of basic skills and fundamental knoweldge. On the contrary, it is the belief of this writer that it is very important for achievement in these areas to be enhanced. Improvement, however, can best be achieved in relation to the developmental status of students rather than in relation to a rigid program.

Must educators assess the impact of physical-social variables on learning in our culture? Do occurrences such as increased day dreaming, emotional upheaval, and restlessness have any effect on achievement? Logic, research data, and past results indicate that these concomitants of physical-social growth do indeed tend to adversely affect learning. Conversely, is there data to support a model which, in effect, rejects their implications? What evidence is there that indicates a rigid scientific learning model is effective?

The Graded-Age Model Versus Developmental Grouping

If middle school educators are going to break the junior high-middle school cycle which has existed since 1910 (i.e. Rationale ⟶ Partially Appropriate Program ⟶ Inappropriate Program Rationale ⟶ Partically Appropriate Program Inappropriate Program ⟶ Rationale), a fundamental change must occur. In the opinion of the writer, the basic premise underlying the graded-age model, upon which the present educational system is constituted, makes very little sense. It is constructed upon the following illogical syllogism:

> There is a seventh grade
> These students are in seventh grade
> Therefore:
> These students are seventh graders.
> Therefore:
> Program must be designed as a seventh grade program.

Upon this premise, instructional parameters are developed; textbooks, curriculum instructional techniques, and evaluation. It is this basic premise which prevents attainment of the potential of middle schools. Since students are diverse in all aspects of their development and diverse in their achievement levels, a model geared to sameness and homogeneity cannot be responsive.

The prevailing graded organization is far more complicated than merely being a technique for the assignment of students. Its significance is greatly attached to the instructional program. The graded concept has led to the graded standard, graded textbooks and materials, and graded concepts such as remedial instruction applied to those students who

do not progress in graded increments. In many respects, it has become part of our culture, with students attending grade schools and being classified as sixth graders or eighth graders.

It is this basic premise which prevents attainment of the rationale of the middle school. The alternative which this writer suggests is a fundamental shift in the manner of thinking about youngsters in the middle years. A shift away from the chronological age-graded model.

The concept which seems most appropriate is one which medical practitioners refer to as maturational or developmental age. Falkner (1966) describes the reasoning for this concept. He wrote:

> We are accustomed to describing an individual acquaintance by some physical characteristic and his chronological age. This last factor is supposed to supply the final unmistakable clue. Yet, if the individual is described as a 13 year old boy, human biologists are the first to be at a loss. Since there is such a very, very wide variation among normal children in the age of onset of the adolescent growth spurt, and since the period is one of such rapid growth, it is little wonder we are lost.... The morphological, physiological, educational, and social implications of this difference are manifestly important. In the field of human development, we must, therefore, consider another age process: maturational or developmental age.

Physicians who have studied this maturational level have suggested a need for educators to view programs from a developmental point of view. Tanner, an eminent British physician commented on the need

for teachers and schools to consider growth patterns in context of maturation. Tanner (1961) stated:

> The assessment of developmental age by medical means, may be of value to the teacher... an assessment of physical maturity is regarded in many countries as an essential part of the examination of a child referred to child health services because of behavioral disorders, unexpected educational failure, chronic ill-health, or sub-standard growth. But, the formal determination of physical maturity in a few children is perhaps less important than the general realization amongst teachers of the existence and effects of individual differences in tempo of growth, and the planning of the educational system to accomodate them.

Drash, as a result of the Boyce Medical Study and considerable other medical research relating to pubescents, arrived at a similar conclusion. Drash (1976) stated:

> Will curricular changes based on developmental information significantly effect the future course of the student in either academic, physical, or emotional terms?... It seems highly likely that beneficial results will accrue. It is hoped that innovative schools will begin embarking on such a program with adequate controls and observations....

If schools and school programs were approached in a developmental age context, significant change would inevitably occur. If developmental age is accepted, significant curriculum and learning

strategy problems associated with the traditional program could be overcome by a curriculum geared to individual rates of achievement in basic skills and diverse levels of achievement. It is apparent that a graded curriculum and developmental age considerations are incompatible; conversely, the concept of continuous progress and developmental age compliment each other. Developmental age concepts facilitate individual strategies and deter graded instruction. In the grade level approach, traditional learning strategies of presenting graded content, covering material, and conducting group lectures seem appropriate. In a developmental age context the treatment of learning is more consistent with the diverse levels of student growth encountered in the middle level.

Conclusions

If middle schools intend to maximize academic growth, learning must be considered in two dimensions. First is the educational program with all the aspects related to the efficiency of learning. Second, those conditions which deter learning must be eliminated or at least minimized. The learning process is not an isolated scientific endeavor unrelated to the child for whom it is intended. It is an integral process involving the child and the developmental status of the child.

By accepting the alternative of developmental age, the rationale of the middle school seems attainable. By continuing to view students developmentally while grading them in a program sense, we have a built-in contradiction. It is this built-in contradiction which leads to an inappropriate program.

Several years ago, this writer suggested (1971) the following:

> The promise of the middle level of education lies in its potential. It presents educators with immense possibilities. If educators are content merely to apply the inadequate approaches of the past, middle schools will simply go the route of former organizations. If, however, educators are prepared to study the characteristics and needs of this unique student and initiate an imaginative approach to program development, the promise for middle school education can be fulfilled.

In this article a clear alternative has been suggested. It is an alternative grounded in the characteristics of the learner group. Obviously, accepting such an alternative has serious implications. It is, however, an alternative clearly compatible with the rationale subscribed to throughout this century by junior high and middle school proponents.

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PHYSICAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Attempting to predict the future is always a precarious undertaking with imprecise results. In terms of scientific scrutiny, of course, it falls short of the experimental method of inquiry. The prognosticator whose forecasts come true is hailed as a prophet. He whose predictions are the antithesis of the actual events is met with sly smiles by his friends and almost imperceptible tappings of fingers to foreheads by total strangers. Therefore, it is the wise writer who records his predictions, entrusts their keeping to a valued friend, and reveals them in the future only if they are "dead on target." The foolish one records them boldly for all to see and runs the risk of being haunted by them in later years if they prove inaccurate. It is with this risk in mind that this prediction for an alternative future for the middle school is presented. It is hoped that the reader's reaction now and at some future date will be limited to the aforementioned sly smile.

In predicting the future one must be cognizant of the past and the present. The middle school has suffered, in many respects, because of its geneology. The public as well as many professional educators have believed that it is little different

from those institutions they feel they know and understand -- the elementary school and the junior high school. Like the proverbial acorn, it has fallen all too close to the tree. Many middle schools have been organized to resemble elementary grades pruned and grafted to the junior high school. In some of these schools the grades formerly considered elementary are treated like "red headed stepchildren" feeling unloved and unwanted. For example, often pre-vocational offerings are limited to the seventh and eighth grades, the junior high years continue to operate in tandem with the senior high school.

The major reason for the differences in middle schools can be traced to the very reasons for their existence in various parts of the country. Those which have been brought about for expediency - for purposes of racial integration, for relief of overcrowded conditions, for utilization of underused buildings -- usually are not characterized by curricular and instructional change. Conversely, those which are the result of years of professional planning for a new kind of education for a unique group of youngsters from 10 to 14 years of age exhibit facets of evolutionary curricular and instructional change. These schools reflect a cohesiveness of program usually in direct proportion to the amount of educational planning and lead time prior to the opening of the school.

Foci of the Past

Even in those schools which are considered true middle schools, the focus has shifted over the years. Initially the concern was for the cognitive development of transescents (10 to 14 year olds) and an often expressed concern was for

the achievement test performance of this group as compared to students from traditional programs. In those early days of the middle school movement, its advocates were quite defensive when questions were raised concerning its academic integrity. Many advocates set out to prove that the middle school provided a setting in which academic performance was valued. The results were often reported as inconclusive, which usually meant that no significant differences were found. Few researchers recognized, however, that these inconclusive data were, in themselves, a positive result for the middle school.

In the early 1970's the educational pendulum swung to the affective side of the scale. We heard a great deal about the humanistic approach to education. Volumes were written about the self concept and the emotional aspects of education. We placed great stock in the function of the guidance counselor and the need for home-base counseling. In some schools this homebase counseling session was considered such a vital part of the middle school concept that it was scheduled daily, but often isolated from the rest of the program and scheduled as a holding period prior to lunch. It is little wonder that many home-base programs failed.

Today the middle school pendulum seems to be somewhere between the two foci -- academic and affective. The "back to basics" movement has forced a leaning, however, in the academic direction.

I often think of this swinging of the educational pendulum in terms of a story a friend of mine once told about an experience he had in World War II. He was an infantry lieutenant in charge of a group of men who had been ordered to capture a strategic hill on an island in the Pacific. Each night my friend and his men would fight to take the hill; each morning the Japanese would recapture it. This went

on for several days until one night when his men were exhausted and many were wounded, he decided not to capture the hill when ordered to do so. By noon the next day the condition was the same as it would have been had he followed orders -- the Japanese were in control of the hill. I sometimes think that if we were to take a stand in the middle of the path of the educational pendulum, eventually things would swing back to us.

Focus of the Future

A major factor has been overlooked in the movement of the educational pendulum. The physical nature of the transescent is basic to both the affective and cognitive development. Genetic, nutritional, and environmental factors which relate to all three developmental areas have been well documented. The teacher who has tried to work with hungry children need not be reminded how difficult this task can be.

Maslow (1954) in his "hierarchy of needs", identifies those of a physiological nature as the most basic, ones which must be satisfied before one encounters those at a higher level. Physical discomfort of any kind can prevent the youngster from attending to activities of a cognitive or an affective nature. In only a few middle schools, however, have there been provisions for the unique physical nature of transescents.

At the Boyce Middle School in Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania, youngsters have been grouped for instruction based on their maturational levels as well as on their achievement levels. At this school the early maturing girl of average ability is not assigned to a group with late maturing boys of average ability. In most middle schools this type of grouping

is the exception rather than the rule. Consider the number of schools still using gang showers in physical education facilitites when we know that transescents are keenly aware of their physical development as compared to their peers. Consider, also, the absence of health education as an integral part of the curriculum. All too often it has become an adjunct to instruction in science or a rainy day activity in physical education programs lacking gymnasium facilities.

The focus of the future will be on the physical nature of the transescent as it relates to all aspects of his life -- cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

Causes of the Change

The medical profession is providing an increasing amount of data pertaining to the early adolescent and his physical development. Once included as part of the practice of pediatrics, the specialty of adolescent medicine is now coming into its own. One need only check medical directories and the listing of departments within medical schools to ascertain the growth of this emphasis.

Physicians and research scientists are beginning to explore the effects of environmental factors such as sunlight and artificial light on the development of the human body. Increasing emphasis is being given the problems of alcohol and other drugs on this age group. Many studies are underway to determine the effects of food additives on physical development and emotional behavior. Pregnancy and venereal disease are increasing rapidly among early adolescents as well as with their older counterparts.

Perhaps the greatest effect of the change of focus to physical development is just beginning. The Education of All The Handicapped Act of 1975 (PL 94-142) has been enacted by the 94th Congress. This law provides for the instruction of exceptional children from infancy through the age of 21 years in the local schools -- a free appropriate education at public expense while safeguarding their civil and human rights. This public education must be provided with public funding and supervision, and it must meet state accreditation standards while including an individual education program (IEP) for each youngster. This IEP must assess the student's present performance level, determine annual and short-term goals, specify services to be provided, determine the extent to which he can participate in the regular program, and select appropriate evaluative procedures. In short, it requires that programs be individualized for students based on their physical, emotional, and intellectual abilities.

The development of an individual education program at the middle school level is contingent on the classroom teacher's understanding of the development of the normal transescent, in addition to knowledge about the various types of exceptionalities and their compounding effect on this rapidly developing youngster. Many middle school teachers lack this basic knowledge about the typical youngster with whom they work. Even those who have studied the process of human development may not recognize the many variations among transescents. Add the youngsters with visual handicaps, those whose hearing or speech is impaired, the emotionally disturbed, the mentally retarded, and those with specific learning disabilities and the problems in designing an individual education program may appear insurmountable. The law is quite explicit, however, and these plans must be developed. One of the major results of this emphasis on the handicapped, many of a physical nature, may be the development of a more personalized approach for all youngsters.

The Middle School of the Future

As the result of the federal law concerning the provision of educational opportunities for handicapped youngsters, the middle school of the future may take on a quite different appearance than might be expected.

Youngsters arriving at school would have several optional activities prior to the formal opening of the day. Some may participate in the school breakfast program because of the elevation in blood sugar which prevents them from eating before leaving for school. Others may engage in recreational activities of either a physical or an intellectual nature. Still others may be in conference with teachers or seeking additional individual help. Another group may be working on individual projects relating to one or several subject areas. These projects would be available for all youngsters and designed specifically for their intellectual and/or physical abilities.

As the formal day begins, youngsters will go to areas of the building to which they have been assigned on the basis of their developmental age and broad achievement levels. Each student will have his own work area. Seating will vary in height. Tables will be adjustable in both height and width. Table units will convert to individual carrels with three adjustable upper panels providing individual privacy even as the youngster sits in a group. Lighting in the carrel will be adjusted to the individual's needs and as required by the activity in which he is engaging. Each youngster will have a built-in locker area in his table unit providing secure space for his personal belongings. Tables and chairs will be mobile and can be clustered for group work.

Curricular areas will focus on the humanities (language, social science, art, and music), technology (science, mathematics personal health, home living, and industrial design), and personal exploration (physical education and the activities program). The unit approach will be utilized in each curricular area with a team of instructional specialists in each component. Each curricular area will be based on a list of skills and/or concepts to be mastered. Many opportunities will be provided, however, for youngsters to try out various skills without regard to the necessity for mastery, perhaps for sheer enjoyment. Each part of the cirriculum will be considered equal to all others. Technology will permit a greater degree of individualization of instruction such as computer terminals for interaction learning and other forms of telecommunication yet to be introduced.

Teaching teams in each part of the curriculum will utilize a diagnostic approach to teaching. They will determine the achievement level, interests, and needs of each child. The student and the teacher-advisor will jointly determine an educational plan including long-term and short-term goals and objectives. The youngster may work on an individual basis, with one or two others, or in a small group. At times the entire group of students will work together. There will be many opportunities for youngsters to be away from the school, learning from the community. At times they will be with specific workers learning about educational and experimental requirements for certain careers. They may spend school time with geriatric groups, health units, and law enforcement agencies. There will be many days when the student will be away from the regular school plant working on planned activities. In this way, instruction will be related to practical aspects of everyday living so that the relationship of school work to life will become more apparent to the student.

Lunch will be considered a social as well as an academic program component. Within certain parameters youngsters will help plan meals with a variety of entrees, salads, vegetables, and desserts at each meal. Provision will be made for servings, commensurate with the youngster's intake requirements. The serving area will be a multi-purpose area separate from the food-preparation center. The motif of the serving area will be easily adjusted in conjunction with a seasonal, topical, or aesthetic focus. Appropriate background music will be provided. At the conclusion of the meal, the transescent will once again have several options for the use of allotted time.

Nutritional snacks will be available periodically during the school day. These will be provided in a snack area and will be based on the understanding that caloric needs are greater during the period of rapid growth than at any other time. The transescent cannot consume at one sitting the amount of food he requires to fuel his energies for an entire school day.

The provision of personalized educational programs and the use of technology for interaction learning will cause testing as we now know it to decrease in importance. As Suppes (1975) states,"... our inferences about the performance of students and their capabilities for taking next steps will depend upon a much more substantial record, a much better basis of inference than we have in current tests.

Reporting pupil progress will be greatly simplified. As students indicate mastery of a specific skill or concept, the teachers will indicate progress on a master record. Only progress will be recorded. Activities of an exploratory nature along with teacher comments will be provided in narrative form by the teachers. Photostatic copies of the master

record can be made at any time and can be mailed to parents as needed. Subjective determination of letter grades and those derived by rigid mathematical formulas will no longer be required. If parents desire an indication as to how their youngsters compare with the rest of the group, a separate column on the master record can indicate what most youngsters have accomplished in the group. Other methods of recording and reporting pupil progress such as videotapes, photographs, audio cassettes will be increasingly employed.

At the close of each day's work in each curricular area, the youngster will plan his activities for the next day. These individual plans will be filed in a central location to be referred to the next day.

After-school activities will be provided for the youngsters, parents, and other adults of the community. Activities will include those of a recreational as well as an academic nature. Classroom, laboratory, and media center facilities will provide for individual work and study opportunities in the community school. The entire school facility will be open evenings and parts of weekends for such programs.

Summary

The middle school of the future will focus on the physical development of transescents as it relates to both intellectual and emotional development. This will be due in large degree to advances in medical science, but much of the emphasis will be a direct result of the legal requirements for a more individualized approach to education for exceptional children. As teachers become involved in gaining knowledge about the various exceptionalities of youngsters in their programs, they will become increasingly aware of the physical needs of the normal child. The result will be a more personalized approach for all youngsters based on their personal achievement, capabilities, and maturational levels as well as their interests.

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THE MIDDLE SCHOOL: AN INSTITUTION IN SEARCH OF TEACHERS

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The rapid expansion of middle schools in the United States brings with it an urgent need to produce teachers and other educators with appropriate insights, knowledge, and skills for working with transescents. With an estimated 5,000 middle schools now established in the United States and the prospect of an additional 5,000 emerging in the next decade, it is imperative that teachers receive specialized training (Compton, 1976). This specialized training and retraining is essential if the middle school concept is to survive and prosper in the future. Teachers must be equipped with the necessary capabilities to deal effectively with this most diverse and important age group.

Most teachers serving in middle schools have not undergone a program of preparation intended specifically for the teaching of transescents. The overwhelming majority of those currently teaching at the middle school level have been prepared by departments of secondary education with heavy emphasis on childhood education. This lack of well-trained teachers prepared for and dedicated to teaching at the middle school level is, in the opinion of this writer, the middle school movement's most crucial

and long-standing problem, preventing widespread acceptance and implementation of the middle school concept. Until quality, full term, specialized middle school teacher preparation programs exist at teacher education institutions across the nation, it is unlikely that the majority of middle schools will represent little more than organizational patterns coining new names and making false claims.

The Teacher as the Key

It has been long accepted that the individual teacher plays a major role in determining the degree of success or failure in the teaching-learning act and in the overall effectiveness of a school itself. "Any school is only as good as its teachers" is an often repeated quote. This statement is certainly applicable to the middle school, as indeed it is the teacher who is the key to the implementation of a fully functioning middle school program.

If the key to the success of the middle school movement is the teacher, then without doubt innovative programs that offer opportunities for the acquisition of specialized skills, knowledge, insights, and attitudes must be provided. It is somewhat encouraging that at least a small percentage of institutions of higher education are implementing middle school teacher preparation programs and that a few states have realized the desirability and necessity of establishing special certification for the middle grades. However, this writer is deeply concerned that such a relatively small number of institutions are following this course.

Current Teacher Preparation Programs

Although it is difficult to accurately state the number of institutions currently offering specialized programs aimed directly at training middle school teachers, the percentage is low when compared with the demand for teachers with this training. In a study of 160 accredited teacher training institutions, 23 percent reported having middle school teacher preparation programs (Krinsky, 1972). However, only eleven percent of the institutions surveyed had as a minimum, either a single course or program dealing with middle school education at the undergraduate level, and approximately twelve percent reported a middle school course or program at the graduate level. Only five percent of the institutions planned to establish an undergraduate program and approximately two percent planned to initiate a specialized graduate program. These data along with other evidence indicate an alarming lag on the part of teacher preparation institutions to construct valid courses and programs appropriate for middle school teachers. It is also likely that if the institutions which reportedly have middle school teacher education programs were individually examined and evaluated on the basis of the criteria which have been developed concerning the essential components of an effective middle school preparation program, many would not meet the test. In reality, except for a very few instititions, no comprehensive programs exist and the preparation of middle school teachers consists of little more than one or two specialized courses.

Over a period of years a relatively complete consensus has developed concerning the characteristics of effective middle school teacher education programs (George, 1976). Educators have outlined model programs which have certain unique and predictable differences

from traditional elementary or secondary programs. Some of the reported differences are given below. They are derived from a survey of recommended components presented in the literature over the past years (George, 1976):

1. a special emphasis on knowledge of transescent learners;
2. the middle school concept-goals and programs for transescents;
3. a broad academic background, with specialization in at least two allied areas of the curriculum;
4. special methods of teaching emerging adolescent learners;
5. courses in the teaching of reading;
6. training in affective education and techniques;
7. learning theory;
8. skills of classroom management and discipline;
9. continuing seminars which help the prospective teacher integrate what he/she has learned;
10. an early and sustained series of clinical experiences in middle schools, beginning with observation and progressing to the level of full responsibility for the learning program.

In a study of functioning middle school teacher education programs at several colleges and universities, George and McEwin (1976) assembled and analyzed the program descriptions of twelve of the nation's known middle school teacher preparation programs. Institutions offering only one or two courses in the area of middle school were excluded from the study. Of the undergraduate programs examined, the components mentioned above were found to exist in some format in each of the programs. It is significant that courses designed specifically for increasing the abilities of middle school educators are an integral part of the programs, (e.g. "Literature for the Emerging Adolescent," "Interdisciplinary Seminar," and "Critical Issues in Middle School Education").

On the negative side of the findings, however, it is evident that middle school teacher education programs are, almost without exception, housed in either the elementary, secondary, or curriculum and instruction departments (George, 1976). Based on data received from 639 institutions of the AACTE, Gatewood and Mills (1973) found that in over 95 per cent of the institutions surveyed the middle or junior high school teacher preparation program was incorporated in the elementary or secondary programs. The authors concluded that middle/junior high school teacher education was an insignificant component of most undergraduate preparation programs.

It seems logical that middle school teacher education programs should have departments or divisions of their own, permitting their emancipation from other teacher preparation models and allowing them to deal specifically with their individual programs. They should not be in the vulnerable position of facing the sometimes hidden danger of being a low priority program when important decisions are made which may effect the quality of all the learning opportunities being offered. Surely this important teacher preparation area should receive at least equal status with other programs.

Graduate Middle School Programs

Since as few as five universities now offer complete graduate programs at the middle school level, apparently large numbers of teacher preparation institutions do not perceive the need for advanced graduate learning opportunities for the many thousands of intermediate grade teachers currently teaching in the schools of our nation. Only one university in the United States is known to offer a sixth year specialist program and a doctorate with a heavy

emphasis on middle school education.* With thousands of middle schools in existence and additional thousands expected, where are we to look for leadership if we cannot depend on the cooperative efforts of our public schools and universities? Will the middle school movement fall into one of the same traps as the junior high school movement, the lack of specialized training for leadership personnel? Quality graduate programs must be developed to allow persons with elementary, secondary, or middle school backgrounds to renew their skills and increase their knowledge and competencies for working with this most crucial age group.

Certainly, the initiation of new degree programs and the revamping of existing ones will not guarantee quality educators. However, programs which offer intensive training in the many areas of middle school education will increase the chances of producing highly qualified leaders in teaching, supervision, and administration.

It is unrealistic to expect persons with little or no special training to deal effectively on a day-to-day basis with transescents. There are many talented, dedicated educators in our middle schools who need and seek opportunities to renew and improve their skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm. With middle schools now in all 50 states (George, et al., 1975), how can institutions of higher education continue to deny their responsibility to provide programs offering these persons opportunities to learn by not providing special graduate programs?

While the lack of solid commitment to the development of middle school teacher preparation programs at the university level is quite apparent,

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at least the demand for and interest in new information is emerging. This increased demand offers hope for the emergence of a genuine effort to initiate and improve specialized programs for the teachers of early adolescents.

Certification

The importance of special middle school certification cannot be overemphasized. University programs designed specifically for training middle school teachers are almost exclusively found in those states in which certification patterns encourage the process. States without special middle school certification plans are unlikely to produce fully functioning middle school teacher education programs. As stated by George and McEwin(1976), "Certification and training simply cannot be separated. Students will not prepare for careers for which there is no license to practice, and practicing teachers need greater inducements than altruism."

A national survey of teacher certification practices conducted by Pumerantz (1968) to determine the extent to which special middle school teacher certification requirements had been established, revealed that only two states, Nebraska and Kentucky, had such special certification requirements. A more recent survey (George, et. al., 1975) found that eight states now report a teacher's certificate specifically for middle school. These states include Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Minnesota, and West Virginia. The authors reported a pattern developing in states which now have special certification toward providing exceptions which make it possible to teach in middle schools with either elementary or secondary certification. The authors hypothesize that this pattern is followed to accomodate the thousands of

teachers now teaching in middle schools without special training and certification. Realistically speaking, therefore, even in states with special certification, middle school certification is possible but not mandatory. "Grandfathering" is the rule, not the exception, with the state of Georgia providing a recent and notable exception.

The study by George and others (1975) also points out that in six of the eight states with middle school certification, the primary focus is on a subject specialization along the lines of the high school model. However, in Kentucky and North Carolina the middle school certificate is valid for all subjects in all grades of the middle school. The report notes that special certification for administrators and other special personnel in the middle school areas is almost non-existent. The survey also revealed that at least fourteen other states were considering a special middle school certificate of some type.

The fact remains that with middle schools emerging in ever increasing numbers, approximately forty states have not seen the necessity or desirability of adopting special certification practices. If this apparent apathy or lack of awareness continues, the gap between middle school theory and practice will continue to widen. It is significant, nevertheless, that more states are now considering special middle school certification.

While it is unfortunate that middle school certificates are not mandatory in most of our nation's schools, it appears that increasing numbers of local administrative units prefer to have teachers with special middle school training and certification. If this trend continues, it may encourage more teacher preparation institutions to offer programs designed for middle school teachers and may eventually cause change to occur in certification patterns.

Another crucial issue is the type of certification offered. A case can be made that certificates should be of the type now in effect in North Carolina, allowing teachers to cross disciplinary lines so that innovative practices such as interdisciplinary teaming can be carried out with a minimum of difficulty. The middle school certificate must have some flexibility if teachers are to be able to work closely with each other and plan instructional programs suited to the needs of transescents.

It is extremely important that all states establish special certification practices which will encourage the development of programs providing persons desiring to teach transescents with unique learning opportunities. The youth of our nation should not have to depend entirely on teachers who have to retrain themselves after they have begun to teach. The quality of instruction in the middle schools must not be left to chance. The middle or junior high school can no longer be the "educational parking lot" for those wishing to be promoted to the secondary school or desiring to teach at the elementary school level (Brown, 1972).

In-Service Programs

Thousands upon thousands of teachers who currently teach in the nation's middle schools feel no special need to pursue graduate degrees or obtain additional certification. How can these teachers be equipped with the necessary skills? Only through intensive, systematic in-service activities will significant numbers of these educators be enabled to make real contributions to the improvement of instructional practices in the middle school. Many educators who may never be reached in more conventional ways may be influenced positively if in-service activities are intensive, comprehensive, and meaningful.

In-service educators must move away from the one-shot type of program to the carefully managed comprehensive plan based on needs assessment and input from all those involved in the change process. True change seldom occurs without a comprehensive plan that involves those who would not ordinarily be involved in university courses or other voluntary endeavors promoting the acquisition of new ideas and practices.

Under the appropriate circumstances, these educators can develop and become leaders and implementors of positive change. The future success or failure of the middle school movement has not yet been firmly established. Without the support of the many thousands of teachers now teaching in our schools, the establishment of fully functioning middle schools is going to be, at best, left to chance. All educators at all levels must be an integral part of the change process if positive results are to be obtained.

Summary

It is long past the time to move away from the situation where the needs of transescents are often unknown, misunderstood, or even ignored by educators and by the general public. The dangers of this lack of concern and inaction could prove disasterous in the future. However, if a concerted effort is made by the various agencies and institutions that daily influence, shape and reshape the lives of these youth, there may be hope for the future generations of our nation.

The key institution affecting the lives of these often forgotten children is the school, and the school is the teachers and other educators.

The pitfalls of the junior high movement will not be avoided simply by changing the names on buildings or changing organizational groupings. The key to quality education lies in the institution in which transescents spend a large portion of their lives, and it is up to the persons that make up that institution to provide the kinds of opportunities which will promote the fullest possible development of each person's potential.

The middle school concept offers a chance, perhaps a last chance for many, for educators to make a significant contribution to the lives of the citizens of tomorrow. If we are convinced that the teacher plays a key role in the lives of these youth, how can we, as preparers of future teachers and as practicing teachers, allow the special preparation of middle school teachers to continue to be of such low priority? I believe that most ineffective teaching and most low quality learning experiences can be directly traced to the lack of knowledge of the needs of transescents and an inability to cope with and capitalize upon their uniqueness.

The transescent must have a differentiated program to satisfy the human needs of this special developmental age group. These unique learners require a uniquely prepared staff who are constantly aware of these needs and equipped with the knowledge and abilities to meet them. Herein lies the key to the future of the middle school movement.

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CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

EMPHASIZING STUDENT INVOLVEMENT: A KEY TO THE FUTURE

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The Constitution of the National Middle School Association states that the middle school should be a necessary and distinct entity within the educational system. Justification for this position is derived from the unique characteristics and needs of transescents, who require a staff, a program, and an institutional climate designed to aid them in making a successful transition from childhood to later adolescence and adulthood. Those characteristics prominent among transescents are: rapid physical, social, and emotional changes; great variability both within and among individuals, and a thrust for independence from adult control, coupled with a heightened need for peer approval.

The middle school has responded to these characteristics in a number of ways (Lounsbury and Vars, in press). A rich array of exploratory activities, mini-courses, and other elective experiences provide for the vast differences among students and help them to broaden their interests. Multiage grouping and continuous progress programs provide for individual differences in learning ability and style. Team teaching, in its various forms, enables teachers

to shift from large group instruction to small seminar groups and on to individual investigation according to the needs of students and requirements of the subject matter. In recognition of the emotional and social problems that often accompany transescence, guidance is provided through special counseling groups, group guidance within core or interdisciplinary team programs, and individual counseling by teachers and guidance specialists.

Desirable as all these may be, they do not go far enough. They represent for the most part only activities and experiences planned for transescents by adults. If the middle school of the future is to fulfill its promise to be "necessary and distinct" then there must be more direct student input into the curriculum itself. This does not mean turning over all program decisions to students, but it does mean sharing with students more of both short and long-range decisions about curriculum and instruction.

The term "teacher-student planning" best sums up the kind of cooperative planning required if students are to be genuinely involved in their education. The hyphen symbolizes the cooperative relationship between student and teacher; placing the word teacher first as a reminder that the ultimate responsibility is borne by the adult professional. The nature and extent of student involvement must be decided by the adults in charge, making allowances for the maturity, experience, and interests of the students. Young people have demonstrated time and time again that they can make wise decisions if introduced to teacher-student planning gradually and entrusted with slightly more responsibility than they can handle with ease (Parrish and Waskin, 1967; Van Til, 1967x).

Teacher-student planning should characterize all levels of the middle school program. At the very highest level there should be students meeting with the school's curriculum council or advisory committee, helping to evaluate and make recommendations for the total program. In one large Ohio middle school, the assistant principal convened such a group to help him evaluate the school program. The group consisted of two boys and two girls from each grade - sixth through eighth. After drawing up a long list of complaints, they examined alternative solutions, with the assurance of the administrator that all feasible solutions would be given serious consideration. In an Indiana school system, both students and parents joined with teachers and administrators in a district-wide study of the junior high school program. In both examples, whatever students lacked in years they more than made up in direct experience with the educational enterprise.

Periodic surveys of the student body in each school can provide additional data for planning at the school policy level. A useful instrument for this purpose is the Student Opinion Inventory (1974). The inventory contains thirty-four multiple-choice items that assess student attitudes toward the school's faculty, administration, counselors, curriculum and instruction, co-curricular activities, and facilities. In addition, there are twelve open-ended questions which solicit student recommendations about needed improvements. Schools that do not wish to purchase printed questionnaires may prepare their own. Good results may be obtained by simply asking, "What have you liked about school this year?" and "How might your experiences in school have been improved?" Of course there will be the usual complaints about the cafeteria food (a ritual in any school, no matter how fine the cuisine) and the occasional unhappiness with a particular teacher. But the majority of the students will offer frank, helpful suggestions if they are convinced that the staff is sincere in seeking their opinions.

Students should also be involved in planning for each course, whether it be a core class, an interdisciplinary team effort, or a separate subject. As a start, the teacher should invite the students to share in setting goals for the year. Certainly, students need to know the parameters of planning as specified in state laws, school district policies, and the curriculum guidelines established by the staff of that school. Yet within these boundaries there remains much room for student input. Goals for the year in a core class may range from very specific objectives, such as "to spell better," to broad goals, such as "to learn to get along with people." Single-subject classes may arrive at rather precise behavioral objectives. Broad or narrow, carefully phrased or relatively unpolished, these statements of intent give both teacher and student something to shoot for, and might well be displayed in the room for all to see.

After the teacher introduces a problem, unit, or topic to be explored, students should help to identify specific questions or issues that they believe merit study. For example, questions submitted by students undertaking a sixth grade health unit ranged from "What are teeth made of?" to "What does venereal disease do to you?" These can be categorized and then assigned to student committees for investigation and later sharing with the class. Student motivation is enhanced when they are working on questions that they themselves have submitted.

Moreover, students should be invited to help identify sources of information. The two questions above could be answered by interviewing a dentist and visiting a public health clinic, in addition to more mundane printed and audio-visual sources. A list of sources that is generated cooperatively by teacher and students almost always is more varied

than either the teacher or the students could determine seqarately. Too, student involvement in the process makes it more likely that the sources will be used. As an example, one eighth grader persuaded her mother to take her to the state historical library to gather information for a local history report.

If the class has had input into both the questions to be studied and the sources of information to be consulted, it is only reasonable that committee progress be reported to the entire class, not just the teacher. When kept informed about what others are doing, students can help one another locate information. In one class studying the occult, a class member remembered hearing about two "witches" in the neighborhood. The "witches" turned out to be two college girls who did fortune telling as a hobby and whose mother had reported some success in "hexing" a fruit tree. Naturally, students were all ears when these two young women visited class and discussed their experiences.

Teacher-student planning is essential as individuals and groups prepare to share their findings with the class. The typical oral report is deadly dull for both students and teachers. Challenging the class to brainstorm creative ways to share information results in many ideas, often several dozen, and sets the tone for interesting learning and teaching for the students. Topics that seem to difficult for most students can be undertaken by the teacher, who may use the occasion to demonstrate ways of teaching that are new to the students, such as videotaping, preparing an original slide-tape presentation or communicating both ideas and feelings through interpretive dance.

The culmination of a unit of study also calls for cooperative planning. Vital current issues often call for some kind of action project, whether writing letters to congressmen, making recommendations to the local government, conducting a community rehabilitation project, or publishing a school newsletter or bulletin. Student enthusiasm must be channeled, of course, and students must be cautioned against assuming that all problems are easily solved. Yet apathy is an even greater danger, so some kind of action project, however modest, is highly desirable (NASSP Bulletin, 1974; Smith and Barr, 1976).

At frequent intervals throughout the unit, and especially at its conclusion, students should be invited to share in the evaluation process. Guided by the goals and objectives set earlier, students can help to determine criteria for judging everything from the quality of a committee's presentation to the progress of the entire class. Clear and public criteria, along with the emotional climate of acceptance created by joint planning, reduce the likelihood that a student's rating by his peers will be based more on his popularity than his actual performance. With these precautions, students can evaluate each other on all phases of a unit or project, and most importantly, evaluate their own performance. Some brave teachers even invite students to evaluate their performance as a teacher, both through an occasional survey and through student suggestions placed in a classroom question or suggestion box.

Thus we see that students may have input in all stages of a learning sequence, from setting the goals for the year to evaluating a particular unit or learning experience. Note that we say student input, not complete student responsibility. Teacher-student planning is shared planning, with the teacher playing a key role as adult advisor, leader, participant, and sometimes final authority.

Yet, even teacher-student planning throughout a course falls short of optimum student involvement unless time is set aside for at least a brief study proposed directly by the students, regardless of whether it fits within any existing syllabus or curriculum guide. Current fads, news events, problems or issues of the local community; all provide excellent opportunities to involve students in worthwhile learning experiences. Problem solving, group processes, all types of basic skills, and much valuable subject matter may be derived from studying such seemingly peripheral topics as UFO's, euthanasia, or the latest popular music. More importantly, such an approach keeps the curriculum open-ended and even more directly in tune with the needs, problems, and concerns of today's transescents.

A powerful device for soliciting student involvement is for every teacher to maintain a Question/Suggestion box in the classroom. Those familiar with Bel Kaufman's Up the Down Staircase (1964) will be prepared for the sometimes hilarious, sometimes infuriating uses that students occasionally make of such a device. Nevertheless, in the most open classroom there may be students who are too shy to speak up when the teacher calls for questions and topics for study. Or students may use the box to ask for help with personal problems that are not appropriate for class discussion. The question box stands as a symbol of the teacher's commitment to inviting student input, even if weeks go by with no one dropping anything in it.

Finally, student involvement is essential in determining how student learning will be evaluated and reported to parents. Since both the processes

of learning and the content and skills learned are important, both types of goal should be evaluated. The entire class may compose a few paragraphs that explain to parents the progress of the unit of study. Of course, individual student self-evaluations and personal reporting should supplement the teacher's progress reports.

In short, students should be consulted and involved in all aspects of the teaching-learning process. Only by judicious use of teacher-student planning can the program be kept focused on the boys and girls whose uniqueness serves as the major justification of the middle school.

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THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AS MULTIPLE SCHOOL: A MEANS FOR SURVIVAL

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Failure of the Lighthouse Strategy

The greatest threat to its survival will be realized if the middle school becomes institutionalized as a singular pattern of schooling. Such regression to a linear, conceptual organization would render the middle school just as unresponsive to the educational needs of emerging adolescents as the junior high eventually became. To avoid this fate, the middle school must become a "multiple school", consisting of a wide range of optional learning environments which match learning styles with teaching styles. Thus the middle school needs to personalize learning to the greatest degree based upon the range of characteristics and learning styles presented by its student population. To achieve this elusive objective we must develop the process of curriculum development and program planning as a highly localized activity in each middle school.

In the past, much money has been wasted by sending teams of teachers, administrators and school board members to visit "lighthouse" middle schools. Because of the effectiveness of these programs, the response of most visiting teams is to adopt the total program for their home district. The outcome of such premature judgment has resulted in failure of the exemplary program in the vast majority of districts adopting it. In their enthusiasm, these adopting districts fail to recognize that the success of the exemplary programs in their original districts has come because that program was carefully developed as a response to the educational needs of emerging adolescents in that particular district. It was not adopted en masse from some other successful district.

We must recognize that our initial task is to define carefully the educational needs of our local emerging adolescents and then to develop curricula and programs which are responsive to and not contrary to these needs. The middle school movement must recognize the imperative concerns of Glennys Unruh (1974) for responsive curriculum development. If the middle school becomes content with educational prefabrication of its programs then its potential for continued growth from its exciting beginnings shall rapidly diminish. The "lighthouse" middle school programs offer a further object lesson. While some of these early outstanding programs have gradually lost their visibility, others have not. In the case of the latter, their ongoing success has come from their continuing responsiveness to learner needs through curriculum planning which remains "continuous, cooperative, comprehensive, and deals with concrete proglems " (Krug, 1950). These programs have continued to develop and grow in different directions as changes in local learner needs have been identified. In these middle schools, the programs for learners

organize a wide range of alternative learning environments. Such schools have long recognized and accepted what all middle schools must, if they are to become responsibly effective. This is the simple fact that, if we believe in the pluralistic characteristics of the group we call emerging adolescents, then no one single instructional mode can effectively accommodate the range of learning styles presented by the population in any single middle school. We cannot approach our task if the middle school program is offered through a single instructional pattern.

Alternative Models

Unfortunately in the majority of circumstances, we still force middle school students to adapt their learning styles to the instructional mode of the school, despite what the literature tells us about the range of capabilities in these youngsters. In responding to this reality, the middle school must provide, at the very least, some departmentalized, some self-contained and some team-teaching environments. It costs nothing for a school containing three grade levels and six hundred students to reorganize to provide such a simplistic alternative. It does cause some disruption, and it does pose work for rescheduling and inservice orientation for the operational interface of this rudimentary approach to alternative learning environments. In this respect, we should not fail for lack of trying!

The possibility of alternative learning environments also offers hope to teachers that they may be able to utilize their best personal teaching skills with groups of students whose learning styles compliment these capabilities. This is not to infer that teaching styles can remain inflexible and that middle school teachers will not have to develop alternative and supplementary teaching strategies and tactics. To accomplish this objective

both for students and teachers, the individual middle school must work to become as eclectic as possible in drawing carefully upon the existing range of capabilities of its staff. The objective here is to develop, within the total middle school staff, a range of teaching styles and approaches which can be utilized to provide specific learning environments for students who at given times display the need for such learning environments. The possibility of long-term "lock-ins" must be avoided through the dynamics of flexibility which move youngsters to different instructional environments as they grow and develop individually. The middle school of the future must realize, for example, that it serves learners poorly by having all teachers in the school functioning in team teaching organization. In such a setting we falsely assume that all middle school students learn most effectively in this one instructional mode. We also inaccurately assume that all teachers can be maximally effective through this one instructional approach. We fail to recognize that such a simplistic approach makes mediocore teachers of many who were highly effective with students in either self-contained or departmentalized settings, let alone other options such as core curriculum settings. Thus we lose the opportunity to match learners who could learn best in other settings with teachers who were unusually effective in these instructional modes. If we pursue carefully the matching of learner and teacher styles, we may then be able to develop additional different and more effective learning environments. Our failure to deal effectively with this long standing need of emerging adolescent learners led Joan Lipsitz (Delaney, 1977), to conclude: "I have a basic problems about whether schools for kids at this age (emerging adolescence) make sense. The education establishment talent in this country it not involved in this age group."

This entire process of defining different alternative learning environments cannot be successfully undertaken, unless as was earlier stated, you carefully study and identify the range of learning styles and characteristics inherent in your local middle school population. We need to initially define the nature and qualities of the substance of our enterprise, the learners themselves. Schools pursuing this task are invariably surprised to find that previous labels and stereotypes for students at this level are not adequate to describe their range of capabilities. The enthusiasm of staff upon this realization usually becomes highly contagious. Teachers can then see the implications of Donald Eichorn's (1975) observation that "to describe a youngster as a thirteen year-old is not to describe him at all." One thirteen year-old student may be totally pubescent while another may possess all the maturational characteristics of an elementary school child. One thirteen year-old may be six feet tall and weigh two hundred pounds, another may be four and-a-half feet tall and weigh ninety pounds. One may be reading on a twelfth grade level and another on a third grade level. One may be able to understand abstract concepts and another able only to comprehend concrete examples.

This realization by a local middle school staff causes them to recognize the need to organize and group these youngsters in environments other than chronological and graded settings. Likewise they can understand that the infrequent eleven year-old child who is intellectually and physically far beyond his agemates will have far more in common with some students who are twelve or thirteen. Naturally, they are his peers both socially as well as learners. This recommends the importance of multi-age grouping to provide temporary environments for learners with common characteristics. Within this setting, we can

begin to approach the matching of learning and teaching styles. Unfortunately, the majority of middle schools do not provide even limited opportunity for multi-age grouping of youngsters with such radical maturation differences. This only confirms our general failure to look carefully at the characteristics of students before we organize them in grouping configurations.

To this end the middle school needs to maximize the possibilities for increased cooperative planning among teachers working with common groups of students. Through such planning, teachers can identify the instructional modes most appropriate for the students they share. This can facilitate the development of alternative modes and options within their student group or recommend regrouping of some students in other environments providing a better match of instructional modes for their learning style needs, the refinement of self-contained, departmentalized, core curriculum and team teaching modes can work for the personalization of learning within realistic perimeters of common styles.

Education Versus Preparation

Thus with the creation of "education" in place of "schooling," the middle school could cast off an even greater limiting mentality which has thwarted effective learning. This is the debilitating syndrome caused by the assumption that the primary purpose of education at any given level is to prepare the student solely for the educational demands of the next level of schooling. While there is some validity in such concern, the middle school experience must have as its keystone helping the pupil learn what he finds necessary to solve the current problems

in his life. This is particularly true in terms of the emotional, social, physical and intellectual problems experienced by the student. Thus the middle school program needs to define a successful experience as one that helps individuals cope successfully with their personal journey. Lipsitz (Delaney, 1977) further comments, "As a society we have no coherent concept of adolescence. We have no important rituals which mark transition into and out of adolescence. Adults do not know what distinguishes the adolescent from the child and the adult."

In addressing our efforts to these tasks we must break the middle school-as-preparation-for-high-school lockstep. In developing alternative approaches within the middle school our efforts at curriculum development must recognize the importance of helping learners solve the problems of their own transescent life frame. Certainly the tragic figures of increasing transescent suicide, alcoholism, addictive syndromes and mental hospital admissions should convince us to pay far more attention to help emerging adolescents survive this period as whole human beings. We cannot accomplish this unless we cast off the middle school's time-worn preoccupation with being a "farm system" for the "big league" of high school learning. Colonials in the middle school must resist the imperialistic domination of the high school!

To address this task the middle school must communicate the importance of its own prerogatives among parents and lay people in our communities. Joan Lipsitz (1977) may have provided us with help in her recent book culminating a two year review of the research in early adolescence. The middle school has a sacred obligation to students who enter its doors. That is to help them cope successfully with

the problems of their transescent experience and develop a holistic and positive self-concept. To meet this need for the wide range of developing humanity which emerging adolescents bring to us requires the definition and development of the middle school as a program of interfaced, interrelated educational alternatives. The middle school must either achieve this, and help students understand their individual uniqueness in growth, maturation and learning or we really ought to quit now and stop deluding ourselves and hoodwinking students.

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ASSURING THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Education, like many other institutionalized activities, has a tendency to go around in circles. What is past is, indeed, prologue. The present sometimes turns out to be essentially like the past. Progress can and often does come out of regression. The movement to reorganize education which began circa 1910 has been full circle. Much of what is happening in middle school education today closely resembles earlier developments in junior high school education as the cycle repeats itself. This may seem like a note of despair or an expression of fatalism, but it is only intended to be a bit of realism and a point of perspective. History does not always have to repeat itself.

The middle school must guard against becoming a victim of its apparent success; pleased with its good press, its numerical status, and its firm position aboard the bandwagon of the 70's. The more it becomes institutionalized, the greater the danger of its becoming petrified.

Even though the place of an intermediate institution in American education is now fairly secure, its nature is still under discussion. Securing a place in the education sun is not the primary task for the middle school. In the language of the transescent, it needs to "hang loose."

In the final analysis, the essence of the middle school movement does not lie in the particular organization it advocates or its grade level composition. Organizational distinctiveness is so readily achieveable that it is all too easy to let it become the only goal. The essence of middle school education is, and ought to be, its philosophy of teaching and learning. Here is the major arena for implementing those fundamental questions of education that have nagged thoughtful educators for many, many decades. It is, or ought to be, a major manifestation of what was once called progressive education.

The middle school is not a new invention, and it ought not be mass produced as if it were an end in itself. Middle school education is, however, a means to an end. It is an exciting educational opportunity. The professional enthusiasm, commitment, and expertise that exist abundantly in the middle school movement should be exploited positively and fully. Our energies should focus on capitalizing on administrative reorganization and label switching for the purpose of working on instructional improvements; putting into practice more of what is known about teaching and learning. The locus of our major efforts in middle school education should be on the student-teacher relationship, for that is the only place in education where there is really a pay-off.

The Overuse of the Class

The American educational system at the junior and senior high school levels has had only one major string on its organization-for-instruction violin; the string of a class, a group of 30 pupils assigned to a teacher for fifty minutes, with a responsibility to cover a particular body of

knowledge. The vehicle of the class is the most overworked arrangement in education. Its excessive use is supported by long-standing tradition, widely held expectations and administrative manageability, but not by research evidence on its efficacy. The middle school must institute alternatives, even if only to prove that the existing pattern does have value.

Somehow, someway, the middle school has to open up institutionalized education, to make possible professional diagnosis that is followed by professional prescription. Regretably, the present structure not only makes individual diagnosis difficult, but most often all but pointless. It is hard to escape the conclusion that schools generally have been either unable or unwilling to provide an education that is truly fitted to individual beings.

The traditional schedule, and its counterpart of the graded system, is convenient and acceptable in a system that, while it wouldn't want to admit it, is heavily committed to providing custodial care. In such a system it seems to make sense to catalog youngsters, label them, and treat them as members of some group. The educator's role often becomes heavily weighted toward that of a caretaker, concerned with bells and schedules, lockers and ledgers. Multiage grouping in athletics and band is readily accepted, but the academic program is held in lockstep.

We start out in the middle school with the greatest diversity that exists in the twelve grades of public education, and then we organize a school which is in direct conflict with this diversity. We organize kids into herds, based on chronological age and call them grades, then divide them into pens

based on an arbitrary number and supposed likeness in one trait and call them classes. We then move the groups through an all too common curriculum. Indeed, at this level when young people exhibit their greatest diversity, we often present them with a more standardized and common program than at any other time in the educational process.

About the nature and needs of early adolescents there is no mystery. They are very open, making their thoughts and behaviors very evident, and "playing games" far less often than adults. They are normal. Sometimes we have even over-emphasized their distinctiveness and uniqueness, for on careful analysis no completely new traits appear during this period; none occur solely at this level. We are dealing with rapidly developing and expanding characteristics rather than unique ones. Too, so much of what is difficult or distinctive about early adolescence is culturally caused rather than innate.

Whether or not we adequately provide for the needs of middle school youngsters, we know they are growing physically, and need lots of exercise; some competition, but also some rest and quiet. They have a new intellectual prowess and need challenge rather than just repetition and drill. They need discussion, the opportunity to experiment, to sample, They are filled with emotions that lie close to the surface. They still need structure, but they also need opportunities for free expression in literature, poetry and art. They are, of course, highly conscious of their peers and their opinions.

The herculean task of providing education for all American youth has inevitably resulted in a heavy reliance on organizing a system built to accommodate masses. It was easy to slip into the

pattern of the simple self-contained classroom at the elementary school level and the teacher-class-subject arrangement at the secondary level. Soon a general pattern emerged that became standard for secondary education. It could be expressed as a formula: Ed. = 30_s x 6_p x 5_d x 36_w. If there was anything to be taught, fit it into the formula. Get thirty students, offer a class in one of six periods for five days a week and continue for thirty-six weeks. Sometimes slight alterations, such as eighteen weeks or thirty-five pupils were accepted but by and large the one basic formula was and still is followed. The junior high school soon fell into this secondary pattern despite considerable experimentation with the core curriculum. Likewise there is danger that the intermediate unit, now usually called the middle school, will fall victim to the tradition and administrative simplicity of the subject-class arrangement.

The Key to Continued Success

The middle school movement will be a continuing success to the degree that it is able to break with the departmentalized, subject-centered curriculum that has been an albatross around the neck of intermediate education for decades. So long as our pattern of organization perpetuates the notion that all youngsters in the same class should learn the same material at the same time in the same way, the middle school will fail to achieve its goals. Groups, grades, and classes are administrative arrangements far more than they are appropriate instructional strategies for transescent youth. A class doesn't learn, it has no mind. A grade has little commonality other than a general chronological age, and groups are never really homogeneous. A teacher's lesson,

no matter how well thought out and professionally presented, is seldom right for an entire class. The teacher-class system has led to a situation wherein teachers are so busy teaching "classes" that they don't have time to direct the education of youth. Procedures need to be developed that support the total development of individuals as well as supporting the acquisition of information. Means must be found to give affective education a firm place in the middle school.

America's middle school is still on the cutting edge. It has engendered much excitement, broad involvement, and considerable experimentation. It must now avoid the easy temptation to standardize; becoming set, and satisfied with grade level reorganization and a new label. Continued success depends upon continuing efforts to break the lock step of the teacher-subject-class arrangement.

Let all of us who have a real interest in the education of transescents make the most of the tremendous opportunity which the middle school movement presents. Let us keep our eyes on the diverse youth we serve. Let their needs take precedence over teachers' preferences based on obsolete subject-centered preparation programs. Let us have the courage of our deep convictions, willing to break with the safe, standard teacher-class-subject arrangement. For only as we turn classrooms into laboratories and convert teachers from "tellers" to directors of learning will the separate middle grade educational unit be justified and effective.

PART THREE

A LOOK AHEAD

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THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US

> There are two futures - a future of fate and a future of desire.
>
> - Bernal

A detailed study recently completed by colleagues of mine at the University of Florida deals with the task of forecasting the future of education in America.[1] According to this study there are ten variables which have the greatest potential impact on the future for our schools. A distinguished panel representing the fields of anthropology, counseling, education, political science and sociology identified the factors and predicted the trends which the factors were likely to follow in the foreseeable future.

The panel made the following predictions about the ten factors:

1. The percentage of American children living in poverty will increase.
2. Family expectations, attitudes and aspirations toward student's education will decline.
3. The self concepts of students will become more negative.
4. The general ability of students, as measured by IQ tests will decrease.
5. Student motivation will decrease and attitudes toward school will become more negative.
6. The students' sense of control of their own fate will decline.
7. Peer group expectations, attitudes, and aspirations toward school will become more negative.
8. Teachers will expect less and less in terms of performance from their students.
9. Teaching, how the teacher actually carries out the tasks of teaching, will get better.
10. Leadership styles and organizational climate of schools will get better.[2]

In addition to their independent effects, each of these variables is involved in a complex webb of interaction with each and all of the other variables. School, home, and the community are inextricably interwoven; so that the effects of one are at least partially determined by the strength of all of the others.

If we drift into the future instead of designing it, and if the preceding predictions are correct, there may not be much of a future to experience. What conclusions can we draw from this forecasting? If the trends continue as forecast, is there little that we can do? Are we doomed to a downward communal spiral destined to destroy the culture? To agree with this point of view would be to involve us in the most disasterous of self-fulfilling prophesies. What positive role can middle school educators play? If the look ahead offered in the preceding sections of this bulletin by a group of the nation's outstanding middle school educators captured some of the truth, what must we do in the years remaining in our careers?

This is what I believe must be done.

First, we must realize that the middle school offers us, as individual citizen-educators, the best possible opportunity available to influence the future. Others may choose politics, medicine or science; we need not envy them. We ought, instead, celebrate the set of fortuitous circumstances that have brought each of us to this movement. The challenge is to be aware of the possibilities and to mobilize ourselves to seize the advantage offered to us. We must realize that this may be the culture's last chance. Even if it is not, it is mine, and yours.

The atmosphere of blame and mistrust that separates each of the subgroups within the middle school movement must be dispelled. Teachers mistrust school principals, principals fear their superiors and their communities; and everyone blames university professors, who never have been able to work together. All of us hate junior high school people, and they still refuse to acknowledge the existence of the middle school movement. Am I so rigid as to believe that only my subgroup, whichever it happens to

be, has the final answer to the best way in intermediate education? Intolerant, blind, "true believers" are a menace in any field. Can we be committed, but open, flexible enthusiasts instead?

If we can manage to wake to the challenges which face us and to unite behind those goals, then the advice laid out for the middle school movement by the writers of this bulletin should serve as a roadmap in the years ahead.

The healthiest sign of all is that the guidelines suggested are largely within the control of the middle school movement itself. We can change the staff development and teacher education practices so that they are more effective and widespread. We can clarify the standards for evaluation of middle schools, both formative and summative. We can decide for ourselves where the balancing point should be between a flexible, ever-evolving middle school and a clearly-defined widely-understood consensus on just what a complete middle school must be. When we have done this, we can find ways of emphasizing quality as well as quantity; self-policing our way toward excellence.

We can educate the community about the relationship between basic skills and curricular leadership. We can be accountable for what we agree to accomplish, demanding the right to accomplish those goals as only professional educators can know how to do. We can even lobby effectively for funding formulas which give us the tools we need to accomplish the tasks.

I think we can build a school based upon the characteristics and needs of the students within it. I think we must.

> Over the long pull, no specific outcome, especially if repugnant to human dignity is "inevitable". If we mobilize our resources of knowledge and motivation, we can pass beyond the status of passive instruments of history and become its most effective principals. It is this mobilization that I believe should preoccupy public education.*

* H.O. Lasswell. "The Future of Government & Politics in the United States." In L. Rubin, editor. The Future of Education: Perspectives on Tomorrow's Schooling. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1975. p. 21.